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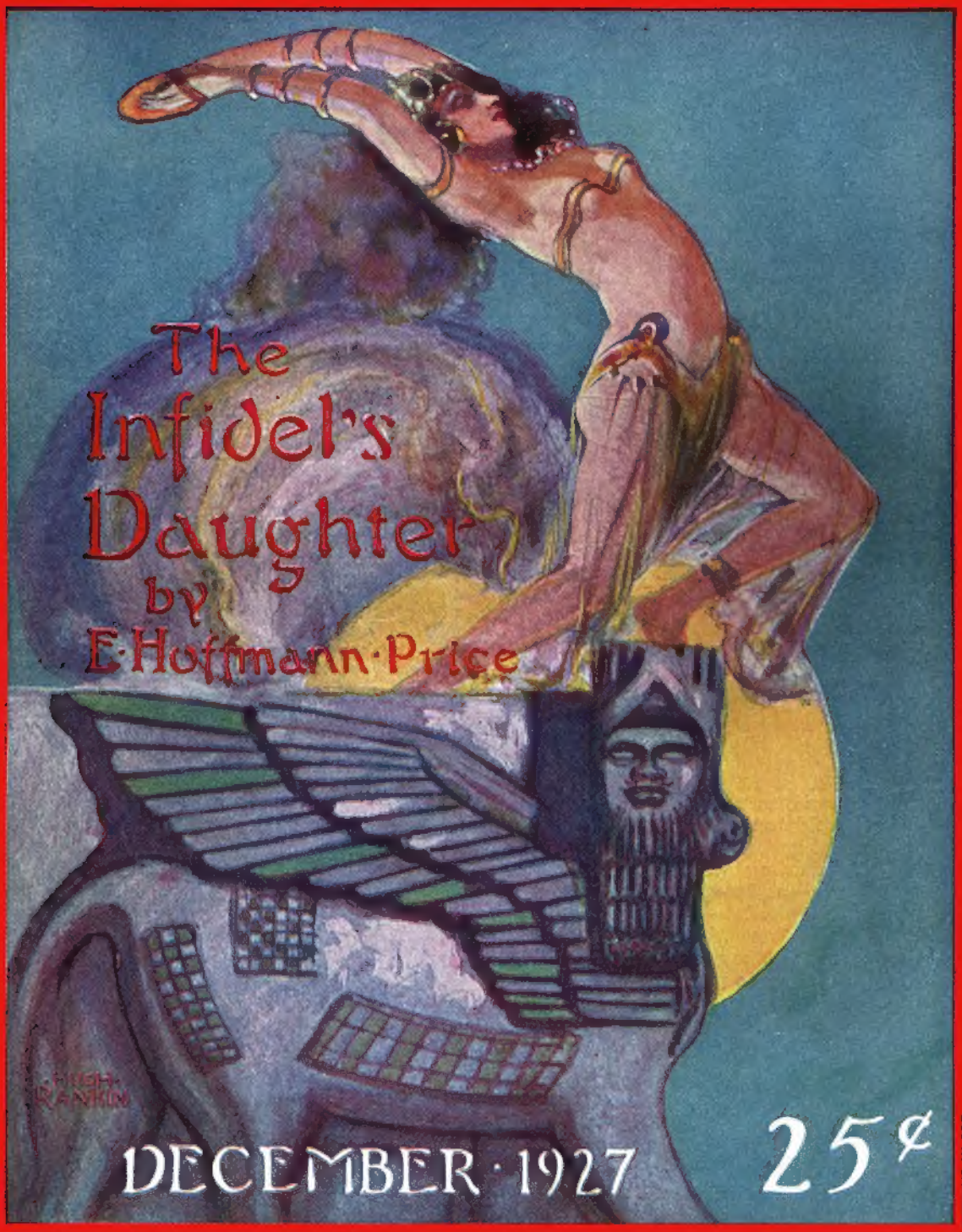

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME X NUMBER 6

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States; $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

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Contents for December, 1927

Cover Design ..... **Hugh Rankin**
Illustrating a scene in "The Infidel's Daughter"

The Eyrie **724**
A chat with the readers

The Saturnienne ..... **Clark Ashton Smith** **728**
Verse

The Infidel's Daughter ..... **E. Hoffmann Price** **731**
Landon built a ziggurat in Feringhistan that he might aspire to the Hundred and One Strange Kisses of Sarpanit

The Sword of Jean Lafitte ..... **W. K. Mashburn, Jr.** **753**
The shade of the old pirate returns to wreak vengeance upon the last descendant of his enemy's family

The Swooping Wind ..... **Wilford Allen** **764**
A strange little tale about a scientist who was the sport and creature of the winds, and under their protection

(Continued on Next Page)

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(Continued from Preceding Page)

The Witch-Baiter ..... **R. Anthony** **769**
A torture-tale of the witchcraft craze in Holland—a Dutch zealot, fanatic superstition, and a day of reckoning

The Devils of Po Sung ..... **Bassett Morgan** **775**
A creepy, powerful tale of brain transplantation—a pirate story of the South Seas

White Lilies ..... **Josie McNamara Lydon** **788**
Verse

The Canal ..... **Everil Worrell** **789**
Through the night flapped evil shapes, vampire-things of loathsome aspect—a shuddery horror-tale

The Jungle ..... **Cristel Hastings** **802**
Verse

Bells of Oceana ..... **Arthur J. Burks** **803**
A gooseflesh story of the sea by the author of "The Invading Horde" and "The Ghosts of Steamboat Coulee"

Folks Used to Believe
The Dragon and His Kinsmen ..... **Alvin F. Harlow** **812**
The dragon, the griffin, the wyvern and the hippogriff

The Dream ..... **Maurice Rothman** **813**
A peculiar story is this, a fantastic tale about a dreamer whose dreams were more vivid than reality

White Orchids ..... **Gordon Philip England** **819**
The extravagant passion for rare flowers led to a weird and grisly adventure, and disaster

When the Dead Return ..... **Percy B. Prior** **826**
It is sometimes unpleasant to have a husband return from the grave, especially if the widow is married again

The Sleepers ..... **August W. Derleth** **829**
A five-minute ghost-story—the passenger was annoyed at finding his berth occupied by a specter

The Time-Raider (Part 3) ..... **Edmond Hamilton** **832**
A four-part serial story about an entity that sweeps back through time to seize its victims

Weird Story Reprint
Dracula's Guest ..... **Bram Stoker** **849**
This story was originally intended to be part of the book, "Dracula," but was excised before the book was published

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JUST a word or two about serials in WEIRD TALES. This magazine does not overload its pages with serials, because our readers like to be able to finish a story without waiting for future issues to appear on the news stands. However, some of our most thrilling stories have been serials, and we feel that it would be unfair to our readers to deny them the pleasure of reading a fine weird story merely because it is too long to print complete in a single issue.

Ray Cummings has written an amazing sequel to *Explorers Into Infinity*, a startling weird-scientific story called *The Giant World*. It would not be possible to print it complete in one issue without crowding out several very fine stories by other authors. But our readers, we feel, should be given the best weird stories obtainable, and we do not want to deprive them of the inestimable privilege of accompanying Martt and Frannie to that giant world with its eery monstrosities, its blood-freezing horrors, and its weird beings that dwindle out of largeness unfathomable. So we shall print it as a three-part serial. This magazine has refused to make any hard and fast rule which would bar out stories merely because they are too long to be printed complete in a single issue. However, we print only one serial at a time, in order to have as large an assortment of thrilling short-stories and complete novelettes in each issue as possible. The current serial, *The Time-Raider*, began in the October issue; we are holding off the first installment of *The Giant World* until next month's issue, when *The Time-Raider* will end; for by running only one serial at a time we are able to give you a large number of complete weird stories in each issue, instead of filling up our pages with continued stories.

From time to time in the editor's mail there have come requests that we publish fact articles about the werewolves and vampires and other legendary weird beings that appear in our stories. As WEIRD TALES is a fiction magazine, we have been averse to printing articles of any sort, preferring to use the space for thrilling weird stories. But we have found a way to place

(Continued on page 726)

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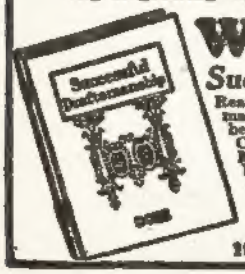

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(Continued from page 724)

these weird beliefs of our ancestors before you without cutting down the number of stories, by printing short articles of only a page or even less in length. Alvin F. Harlow is the author of this series of very short articles, which he has called *Folks Used to Believe.* In the space of a page or less in each issue he will describe such legendary weird creatures as the vampire and werewolf; Lilith, first wife of Adam; the salamander, which can sit in a hot fire without being burned; the basilisk, with its deadly poisonous gaze; the phœnix, rising miraculously from its ashes; the barnacle goose, the unicorn, the cockatrice, and many other strange beings in which our ancestors believed.

"Lovecraft's story in the October issue, *Pickman's Model,* breathes the eeriest, most paralyzing and yet most realistic atmosphere of horror I have encountered anywhere, fiction or fact," writes Jack Snow, of Dayton, Ohio. "Most weird tales are fantasies pure and simple, told in a manner that is momentarily convincing. But Lovecraft's tales make you halt in the middle of a downtown business street and remark uneasily to yourself: 'Why, that might happen!' Lovecraft is the realist of weird fiction."

Max F. Myers, of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, writes to The Eyrie: "Mr. Lovecraft deserves pæans of praise for his latest, *Pickman's Model.* It is my estimation of a weird tale in every sense of the word. I believe that his technique is unparalleled by any of the authors who contribute to your magazine (my apologies to Mr. Quinn). 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.' Perhaps that is why I went into ecstasies of joy and whooped with delight when I found Lovecraft's name on a story in the October issue."

Such enthusiastic letters encourage us to give you the heartening news that Lovecraft's greatest story, *The Call of Cthulhu,* will shortly be published in WEIRD TALES. We are fully aware that in calling this story Lovecraft's finest we are setting a high mark for the tale to live up to, for he has written such masterpieces as *The Outsider, The Festival,* and *The Rats in the Walls;* but we feel that the vaulting imagination the author displays in this story, his supreme artistry, and the uncanny hold that the tale takes on the reader make *The Call of Cthulhu* one of the greatest and most powerful works of weird fiction ever written.

Writes Iris Lora Thorpe, of Portland, Oregon: "The poem, *Lake Desolation,* by Leavenworth Macnab, in the August issue of WEIRD TALES, was wonderful, and I shall never forget the story, *The City of Glass.* As the secretary of the Northwest Poetry Society, I read a very great deal of poetry, and in WEIRD TALES I find some very fine work."

E. L. Mengshoel, of Minneapolis, writes to The Eyrie: "I have bought and read every issue of WEIRD TALES for the last two years, and I am going to keep on reading that 'different' magazine. Its unique literature affords

(Continued on page 858)

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Long as a leaping flame, superb, magnifical,
Across the sun,
Her banners bear Aidennic blooms armorial
And beasts infernal on a field of ciclaton;
Amid her agate courts,
Like to a demon ichor, towering proud and tall,
A scarlet fountain spurts,
To fall upon parterres of dwale and deathly hebenon.

From out her amber windows, gazing languidly
On a weird land,
Where conium and cannabis and upas-tree
Seem wrought in verdigris against the copper sand,
She sees and sees again
A trailing salt like leprous dragons from the sea,
Far-crawled upon the fen;
And foam of monster-cloven gulfs beyond a fallow strand.

Or looking from her turrets to the south and north,
She notes the gleam
Of molied mountains and of rivers pouring forth,
Clear as the dawn, to fail in fulvous rill and stream
The widening waste amid;
Or swell the fallen meres, abominable, swarth,
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To be the unquested grails of hell, of death and deathful dream.

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And that was the way it always was—I was always being given opportunities to show my ability and always failing miserably. I was bashful, timid, and nervous—I never knew how to express myself, how to put my ideas across. In fact, I was actually afraid of my own voice!

In social life, too, I was a total loss—I was always the "left-over"—the one who sat back and watched the others have a good time. I seemed doomed to be an all-around failure unless I could conquer my timidity, my bashfulness, my lack of poise and inability to express myself.

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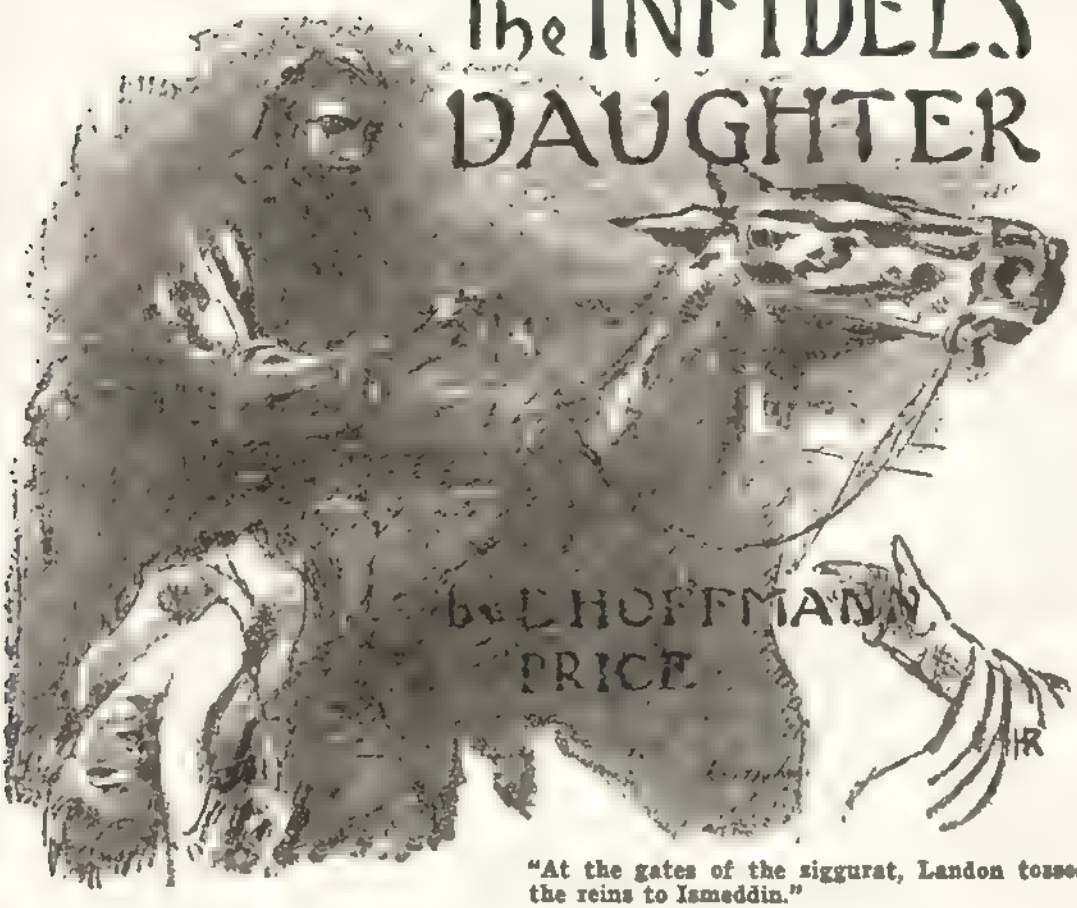
The INFIDEL'S DAUGHTER



"At the gates of the ziggurat, Landon tossed the reins to Ismeddin."

LANDON'S pavilion was pitched on a crest that rose high above the broad plain of Babîl. About the foot of the mound his men were encamped: some quarreling, smoking, gambling, diverting themselves after the day's march; others walking their posts in the darkness beyond the guard-fires. Landon himself awaited the arrival of the chief of his caravan, Haaj Ismeddin, the ex-darvish.

"*Es salaam aleika, saidi,*" greeted the old man as he entered the pavilion.

"And with you, exceeding peace, Haaji," returned Landon. "Where are we tonight?" he questioned as the old man seated himself on the rug at the master's feet.

"We are on the plains of Babîl," intoned the old man sonorously, beginning his recital which only in its details varied from that of the day before, and the many days previous to that one. "Just before us is Mosul, and far behind us is Balkh; to our right is the Tigris, and close at hand is the mound of Koyunjik, under which is buried a lost city of the infidels who once ruled this land."

"Where have we been, Haaji?"

"We have been in all the lands of the earth, *saidi,*" replied the pilgrim. "We have heard the tinkling *sitar* in Herat of the Hundred Gardens, and heard the splash of their fountains; we have seen the star of evening flame high above the un-

counted domes and pinnacles of prodigious Atlanâat; we have seen the incredible bulk of Angkor towering above the jungles of Siam; within the red walls of holy Marrakesh we have been the friends of princes, and in Khotan the khan esteems us."

"And what do we seek?"

"Who knows what we seek, *saidi?* In the tombs of the Kings of Pegu we found cool, unblinking sapphires, and great rubies that smoldered like the embers of a plundered city; and in far-off Java, in mysterious Borabador we found gold that ancient smiths had tormented into odd shapes for the pleasure of forgotten princes. Lost and obscure lands have disgorged treasures to us, who knew not what we sought, and cared not for what we found."

"And where are we going, Haaji?"

"Where the will of Allah leads us, in search of we know not what. And who am I to know more?" concluded the old man with finality, as one coming to the end of a lesson well recited.

"In search of I know not what, to be found I know not where," murmured Landon to himself.

"*Saidi,*" began the pilgrim, "there *is* something which you seek. Can you not trust your servant? Have I not served you well?"

"Well and faithfully, Ismeddin," replied Landon. "What do I seek? What does anyone seek who wanders over the earth?"

"But you have nothing to seek, master. You are wealthy beyond reckoning; you have seen war and adventure; in Herat you have a palace and the daughter of an emir; and the princes of Asia are your friends, from holy Marrakesh to Turkestan. Tell me, *saidi,*" persisted the old man.

"Very well then, Ismeddin! I am on the trail of a phantom. A vision, a legend, an apparition whose traces I have found everywhere, whose presence I have found nowhere. And what I have in Herat of the Hundred Gardens is not enough for me. To say more would be madness. Now bring me my journal, Haaji, and then inspect the sentries. Remember, a hundred lashes for any who sleep on post tonight."

When Ismeddin left, Landon devoted himself to his journal, writing of Mosul, and the mound of Koyunjik, in whose base were the ruins of palaces, and the monstrous effigies of winged bulls whose human heads wore long curled beards, and were crowned with tall miters: solemn, awful images which archeologists had not been able to induce their laborers to disturb. And he regarded with curiosity the clay tablets he had found in the rubbish of the excavations that afternoon: tablets of sun-dried clay, inscribed with cuneiform characters and stamped with seals among whose devices he recognized the Tree of Life. But he could not name the king who knelt and worshiped a woman mounted on a lion.

Three clay tablets. All that remained of lofty walls and great palaces and high towers; three clay tablets, and the solemn winged bulls.

It was most unlikely that anyone could have passed the outposts and the encampment as well. And yet Landon sensed a presence. He glanced over his shoulder; moved away from the wall of the pavilion; resumed the writing of his journal; arose from his work, made a circuit of the pavilion, re-entered, and returned to his task.

The thump-thump of an *atabal* rolled up from the encampment; and then came a monotonous, guttural chant, and the beating of hands and the stamping of feet in unison. His men were diverting themselves with unsavory songs, to whose cadence one of their number burlesqued the steps of a Cairene dancing girl.

Presence, indeed! What if Ismeddin had seen the master glancing

over his shoulder and fidgeting in that fashion!

Landon felt his toes twitching nervously; found himself clenching and then relaxing his fists, and pausing to twist his mustache instead of writing his journal. It seemed that Ismeddin had been gone longer than usual. He wondered why his men never changed the tune of their chant at evening.

A faint breath of sweetness crept into the pavilion, scarcely perceptible at first, but gradually becoming more penetrating, mingling with the aroma of Landon's cigarette, so that he fancied it might be the source of that insinuating perfume. But it couldn't be! Those cigarettes had been made to his order, and ran true to form. And even one, had it been scented, would have betrayed its presence ere this. He ground the half-burned cigarette into the earth just beyond the fringe of the rug that covered the pavilion's floor, and fumbled for an unpolluted smoke. And then, with a start, he dropped his case.

A SLIM girl stood in the entrance, regarding him with long-lashed, smoldering eyes. Silver-white she gleamed through the smokelike wisps of gauze that clothed her shapely form. Yet before all this loveliness Landon shivered.

"I have sought you from afar, *saidi,*" she purred softly, matching with her voice the sweetness that had heralded her arrival, "and finally I have found you. Here, of all places! Encamped on the ruins of that noteworthy house of mine which once stood on this very spot."

As she advanced to the center of the pavilion, she adjusted the extraordinary diadem that adorned the abysmal darkness of her hair. Landon marveled at the sinuous grace of her arms and slim fingers, and the undulating, rippling glide of her walk. And he wondered that he had shuddered as he first met her veiled, Babylonic eyes.

She paused in her advance, halting at the center of the pavilion.

"Noteworthy house?" hazarded Landon, vacantly.

"Yes. It has been in ruins for some time. Oh, ever so long a time! You know, my friend, Naram-sin, built it for me. And when he died . . ."

Her voice trailed into nothingness; her words were completed in an arching of her pointed brows, and a fleeting gesture of her tiny hand, as though no words were needed where but one conclusion could be drawn.

Landon was still wondering how she had ever passed the sentries. For some reason it did not occur to him to wonder how long a time must elapse before one could pitch one's camp on the site of a once noteworthy house.

"Tell me, lady, and who are you to be seeking me?"

One thing at a time; never mind the discrepancy about Naram-sin, and the noteworthy house. And even one thing at a time is too much.

The girl laughed, and effortlessly seated herself, cross-legged, on the lustrous Bijar rug at Landon's feet.

"Those of Mosul who have seen me dancing here in the moonlight call me *Bint el Kafir.* Which in a way is right. Why not call me the Infidel's Daughter, when since the death of Naram-sin I have lived in a villa on the crest of Djeb el Kafir?"

Landon's brain was slowing up like run-down clockwork. He blinked, passed his hand over his eyes, stroked his beard. Questions were fighting for expression. Twice he half opened his mouth to speak, but said nothing. The girl disregarded his stupor, ignored his inertia, and patted her dusky coiffure.

"Yes," she repeated, "I am the Infidel's Daughter. And I have come

to tell you . . . but what have you been seeking all your life of wandering, *saidi?*"

And Landon, as in a dream, began the ritual he had so often heard old Ismeddin repeat, concluding with, "And I am going where the will of Allah leads me, in search of I know not what."

The girl smiled as at a pupil who has learned his lesson well.

"Say rather, *saidi,* if truth is any consideration, that you have heard of a shrine on the topmost crest of Djeb el Kafir, in which hangs a small drum, and at the base of whose altar are three clay tablets resembling those which you picked up today."

Landon momentarily recovered from the numbness that weighted his senses.

"Lady, you know too much of Djeb el Kafir. And you wear a diadem strangely like the one——"

"Why should I not know? I live there, and have, for a long time. But since *you* know so much, *saidi,* have you the heart to learn all? Come now, tell me the truth! Over all of Asia you have sought her who dances to the evening star on the crest of the Mount of the Infidel. But could you endure the Hundred and One Strange Kisses she bestows on those who summon her from across the border? Could you, *saidi?*"

Landon leaped to his feet, staring.

"Who are you?" he demanded, grasping the girl by the wrist. "And how do you know the thoughts I hardly admitted to myself?"

"My lord, I am more than Bint el Kafir. I am Sarpanit. And in Armenia they have another name for me. But you are bruising me. Be seated, *saidi,* and I will dance for you."

Whereat she drew from her curiously embroidered girdle a small vial whose stopper she removed. The heavy perfume that pervaded the pavilion increased to an overpowering, deadly sweetness. With a drop from the vial she anointed her eyebrows; and with her fingertips she smeared a drop of that overwhelming fragrance on Landon's eyelids, and on his black beard. Then, pivoting about on the tips of her toes, she spilled the remainder of the essence in a circle about her, snapped her fingers thrice, and began a dance of statuesque, formal steps and poses.

"Now, if I only had music . . . "

From the encampment below there came, renewed, the chanting of Landon's men, and the pulsing of an *atabal.* But the rhythm was unlike any that Landon had ever heard his men play: a compelling, hypnotic cadence, a throbbing sorcery that rippled up and down his spine in waves of fire and frost, cutting into him like a sword-thrust.

The girl's tiny feet seemed to trace the figures of the Bijar rug on which they stepped; her body rippled and swayed; and her silver-white limbs seemed jointless and serpentine.

Landon noted that where she had spilled that unearthly perfume, there was now a circle of small, quivering, lapping flames; vibrant, incredible flames, bluer than the burning of sulfur.

She paused in her dance.

"There are three tablets which you will pry from the base of the altar, *saidi.* And from the corner of one a piece is broken, so that no man can read the inscription completely. But I will tell you the hidden name of the Infidel's Daughter, the one secret name of her many names, so that you can call her from across the Border."

With her lips to his ear, the girl whispered a word, and twice repeated it.

"Do not forget, *saidi.* . . . And this one kiss, this first, shall lead you to seek the hundred that follow."

Then, as she resumed her dance, the girl chanted a song of unearthly

desires and tormenting delights, of the Hundred and One Kisses with which Sarpanit had caressed Naramsin, who had been a king in Agade, and who had ruled in Babîl. Landon nodded to the cadence of the muttering drums, dizzied by the flickering swiftness of her feet. . . .

A WISP of silk was vanishing through the door of the pavilion. A low laugh rippled in from the darkness. The sweetness was vanishing, and the blue flames had died. Landon started, rubbed his eyes, shivered. Then he drew his pistol and with its butt smote the small brazen gong at his side; paused, and struck a second and third time. Haaj Ismeddin appeared before its last vibration had ceased.

"What of the sentries, Haaji?" demanded Landon, ignoring the old man's salaam.

"On their posts, *saidi.* And awake," he added; unnecessarily, surely, for it was too early for sentries to sleep on post.

Together they inspected the sentries, much to the old man's amazement. And more to his amazement, Landon took an electric torch and closely scrutinized the earth that marked the patrolled boundaries of the encampment. Then, returning to his pavilion, he repeated that same close examination of the surrounding earth.

Ismeddin held his peace, and refrained from inquiring what the master had lost. One can never tell just what may be lost by one who wanders too long in the desert and among ruins; so that it is not wise to ask questions. Yet it seemed that the master was looking for footprints which he could not find.

"The earth is very firm here, and a light tread might fail to leave an imprint," he commented as he finally entered the pavilion.

"Even so, *saidi.*"

"And a stealthy, agile person might indeed have passed vigilant sentries."

"Even so, *saidi,*" agreed Ismeddin.

Landon smoked in silence until his cigarette seared his fingertips.

"Where are we going, Haaji?" he snapped.

The old man stared, perplexed; for that question was out of order. The ritual had already been complied with. But habit asserted itself:

"Where the will of Allah leads us, in search of we know not what——"

"Ah, but now we do know, Haaji," interrupted Landon. "Listen: tomorrow we start northward, into the uttermost limits of Kurdistan, and then still farther north to Djeb el Kafir, on whose crest there is a curious shrine——"

"No, master, there we will not go," contradicted Ismeddin.

"What?"

"I have spoken. We will not go."

"Why not?" questioned Landon, amazed at the old man's contradiction.

"It is a place of evil, *saidi,* where the Infidel's Daughter dances to the evening star."

"What do you know of the Infidel's Daughter?"

"Too much. Too much entirely. So that I do not care to learn more. And we will not go."

"Haaji!" snapped Landon.

The old man glanced up and met the relentless, adamantine fire of Landon's unwavering stare; quivered under that pulsating, merciless will conveyed by the master's predatory eyes; shivered . . . shrank . . . yielded.

"We will go, Haaji," came the slow, deliberate voice of the master.

"Even so, *saidi,*" conceded the old man, admitting defeat.

"Yes. I will go, and you with me; for there will be words which I can

not speak, and scripts which I can not read, and calculations which I can not make; and in all this you shall serve me. That is all, Haaji."

Ismeddin bowed himself from the master's presence. Once without the pavilion and beyond the view of its interior, he halted, lifted his eyes, searching for some constellation, until his gaze rested on a scintillant, evilly flaming, ruddy star that dominated the southeastern quarter of the heavens.

"Playmate and brother of the Infidel's Daughter, may Allah drown your fires in nethermost hell! And you, Infidel's Daughter, by what right do you walk the earth again? Who called you from Aralû?"

Then, head bowed, Ismeddin sought his quarters, where he finally cursed and muttered himself into a troubled sleep.

In the morning the caravan began its march to the north of Kurdistan, bound for the Yuruk Mountains, and beyond, into that wild land of uncertainty that lies south of Trebizond, where strange gods make their homes; where Anaïtis is worshiped with curious rites, and where Malik Taûs spreads his painted fan; where Djeb el Kafir towers loftily to an evil eminence, crowned by the seldom-sought shrine of the Infidel's Daughter.

Bint el Kafir they called her in the south, on the plain of Babîl, a flickering apparition that beguiled wanderers, and dabbling necromancers who sought to reach across the Border; seduced them from their senses, and led them to their doom with her song of the Hundred and One Strange Kisses, and of the indescribable pleasures and joyous torments she once lavished on Naram-sin of Agade. And thinking on all this, Landon's men no longer sang to the beating of *atabals* when they made camp of an evening; desertion thinned the ranks of the caravan to a handful, so that there remained but the faithful few, headed by Landon and the somber-eyed Haaj Ismeddin, to push on through the passes of the Yuruk Mountains, bribed by the master's gold, and beaten by his fierce, exultant eye.

Finally, one evening after the tents had been pitched, Ismeddin entered the master's pavilion and announced, "We are at the foot of Djeb el Kafir. Just before us, and high above, is the shrine of the Infidel's Daughter. Behind us is the source of the Tigris; and close at hand is . . . our doom, *saidi*. Turn back!"

Landon in his exultation dispensed with the remainder of the recital; for now that he knew what he sought, the overpowering madness of his knowledge veiled the memory of his years of wandering, so that the uncounted domes of prodigious Atlanâat, the incredible bulk of Angkor, and red walls of holy Marrakesh were as nothing, and less than nothing.

"Turn back, *saidi!*"

"No, Ismeddin," replied Landon, gently, as one who reproves an erring child. "Have we two ever before turned back? And the doom will be mine, will it not?"

The next morning Landon, on foot and attended only by Ismeddin, began the ascent of the final peak of Djeb el Kafir. All day long they fought their way up the pathless, perilous sides of the mountain, until at last, shortly before sunset, they attained their goal, and halted before a great, conical mass of black rock that rose out of the thin earth of the crest of Djeb el Kafir. In color and texture and luster it was different from the stones in the vicinity: a black outlaw among the gray natives.

"The shrine, *saidi*. The house of *Bint el Kafir*. Ages ago it fell from

heaven, white, lustrous, dazzling; but the memory of her untold iniquities blackens it."

"A meteorite," thought Landon, recognizing the texture and dark color.

As they approached, they noted the sculptures in low relief; smooth, polished by the winds of ages, almost obliterated. At the sight of them Ismeddin stroked his beard and muttered; and Landon wondered if after all that conical rock might not be the topmost pinnacle of the palace of Iblis, reaching up and passing the surface of the earth.

Then, rounding the circumference of the rock, they saw that the sheltered sides were more finely and clearly sculptured. The figures over the low arched entrance were minutely detailed; and the panels at either side were as delicately carved as a cleanly struck medal. A woman of incredible beauty was mounted on a lion, and received the adoration of bearded, kneeling kings. And then there were panels not as easily or explicitly described; tormented and curiously interlaced figures depicting things which, even if allegorical, were grotesque and outlandish beyond all imagining.

"Let us return, *saidi,*" urged the old man. "It is not good to look upon such things." And Ismeddin indicated the unholy sculptures that flanked the doorway of that black, conical shrine that pointed upward like a pudgy, misshapen index finger.

But instead of replying, Landon drew from his belt a flashlight and entered the low archway, shaking off the restraining hand of Ismeddin. The old darvish, foot on the threshold, about to enter, shrank back. Loyalty to the master had its limits.

As Ismeddin paced to and fro at the entrance, he noted the indirect glow of the master's flashlight; heard the tinkle of tiny bells, and the snapping of exceedingly dry wood; heard Landon's footsteps as he prowled about in that awful shrine; became aware of an overpowering, deathly sweetness, as of all the sandalwood of the Indies and all the roses of Naishapur blended into one compelling fragrance. The old man shuddered and wondered what *djinn* or *afreet* would materialize and drive them both stark mad.

"Christ above! Skin and bones!" came the wide-spaced accents of Landon from within. And an instant later he stumbled out of the shrine, bearing in his hand three clay tablets. In the other he grasped a small kettle-drum, and a glittering object of silver filigree and saw-piercing: a curiously wrought diadem.

Ismeddin saw that the master's dark bronze had paled to a sickly yellow; that his hands trembled, and that his lips twitched; not with terror, but rather unbelief, awe, incredulity beyond expression.

"Skin and bones, Ismeddin," he repeated, speaking to himself rather than to his companion. "A king lying on a lofty dais. And on his forehead was the print of rouged lips. On his face the look of him who had lived in an instant all the wonders and bliss ever known in the whole mad lifetime of those who eat hasheesh. . . ."

Ismeddin followed the master's footsteps down the pathless slope.

"He seemed asleep . . . I shook him by the shoulder . . . my hand met not the substantial form of a man, but a hollow shell, skin and bones . . . as the shell of an insect, dried in the sun. . . ."

"You saw that, master?"

"Even so, Haaji. And she herself was there, but I could not see her."

Darkness had fallen. Ismeddin and the master made camp.

"*Saidi,* do you know what you saw?"

"I do, and yet, I do not, quite."

"You saw one who sought the Hundred and First Kiss. And found it." Then, noting the plunder: "What have you there?"

"Three clay tablets, which you must teach me to read; a drum with a head of serpent's hide, which I must learn to play; and this diadem, the like of which I have seen only once before."

"And where did you see it before?"

"In my tent on the mound near Koyunjik. Where she danced before me."

"Ah!" The old man understood. "*Saidi*, break the tablets into small pieces; toss the drum into this fire; and drop the diadem into a deep well."

"No, Haaji. And to see that *you* do not do that, sleep, while I stand watch tonight."

At noon the next day Landon and Ismeddin rejoined the train at the encampment at the foot of Djeb el Kafir; and then, on the following morning, they started on the return trip to the south, toward the source of the Tigris, and thence eastward, with Syria as their ultimate destination. And in Damascus the caravan disbanded, leaving Landon and Ismeddin in that ancient city to recuperate from the long march.

"Since you insist, I will read the wedge-shaped characters on those accursed tablets," Ismeddin finally agreed. "It is the old, forgotten language of the hills, older than that spoken by the infidels who once ruled on the plains of Babil; a different language, but written in the same letters. Naram-sin of Agade learned it. And summoned her from across the Border. You saw what was left of him. You will surely follow. Forget it."

"No, Ismeddin. All these years of adventure have brought me everything but content. So let me track this madness to its finish. I will call her from across the Border. Spell me the first line!"

"*Saidi*," began the old man, many days later, when the tablets had finally been transcribed, "many years have passed since these words were written. In the days of Naram-sin, the proper place from which to call her was near Mosul. And to this day there are legends of the great tower, that ziggurât which he built for her."

"But where shall I build?"

"I can not say, yet. But on a different site. It depends on the positions of the planets, and on celestial configurations. Offhand, I can not say where."

"But what difference, Ismeddin?"

"It is so written. Not only must you pronounce the proper words, and have built the ziggurât, correct in location as well as structure, but also have gone through rites of purification, ending by passing through *bit nûri*, the bath of fire. And even then she will cross the Border only under certain conditions which you will learn from these tablets," explained the old man. "And whether the experiment can ever succeed is not assured." Ismeddin indicated the broken corner of one of the tablets. "Some of the text is missing. Her hidden and secret name is lacking. Without it——"

"But I know that name!" exulted Landon. "So describe me the ziggurât. We will outbuild Naram-sin."

"But how do you know that lost name?"

"I know what I know. That, of all things, I do know."

"What is it, *saidi*?"

"You are my teacher, not I, yours. That word was lost so that none could call her before me. It was revealed to me."

"Where? In the shrine?"

"Who can say?" evaded Landon. "So get to work on your calculations."

And Landon left the darvish to mutter and fret over the tablets, to compute and predict planetary aspects.

DAY after day Ismeddin labored with his calculations, growing more and more somber, sullen, and morose; ever seeking to dissuade Landon from his madness. And then, finally, he brightened, apparently resigning himself to the fatal folly of his master.

"It is solved, *saidi,*" announced Ismeddin one day. "But it remains to be seen whether you can call her. Time has passed, and the signs of heaven have shifted, so that instead of on the plains of Babîl, you must build the ziggurât in *Feringhistan.*"

"That's a bit indefinite," protested Landon. "*Feringhistan* covers a lot of ground. Really now, Ismeddin—"

"Patience, *saidi,* patience! I have calculated the exact site of the ziggurât." Whereupon the old man turned to a mercator's projection of the world and laid off the latitude and longitude of the calculated point, marking its position with a pin. "There you are, my lord. Now pronounce me the outlandish name of that barbarous corner of *Feringhistan.*"

"I suppose I ought to bust your jaw after the *Feringhi* fashion, and then make you spend the rest of the day singing *Columbia the Gem of the Ocean.*" Then, laughing at Ismeddin's perplexity, Landon continued, "You've picked the United States of America, and that particular state where I spent my younger days . . . until I left for my health. . . ."

"Ah! Then perhaps your health would not permit your returning? Anyway, even your great wealth would not be enough to build a ziggurât in that mad land where workmen are paid such prodigious sums for their labor."

"It's been a good many years now, and I'll chance my health. As to expenses, we have the money to back us. Neither objection holds; and the next boat will take us to my native land——"

"Native, *saidi,* but as foreign to you as to me. Go back to Herat, to your own great house where the daughter of Abdulrahman el Durani awaits you. Forget this luminous peril, this alluring apparition. You hasten to meet your doom."

"All of which I know and accept; so that I shall seek Sarpanit, the Infidel's Daughter, and find her, and whatever doom she may bring. Tomorrow we leave for Beirut, and then on the first boat we shall sail for America. And this is the law, Ismeddin; so forget your objections, and serve me as faithfully in *Feringhistan* as you have in the lands of Islam."

2

THE scaffolding and debris incident to construction had finally been cleared away; the workmen had departed; and now, from the crest of a distant knoll, Landon contemplated the colossal bulk of the tower that rose loftily above the rolling plain. Its first stage of black masonry just topped the tallest trees of the surrounding grove; its successive stages, of diverse colors, ascended in terraces and culminated in a seventh and topmost stage of gleaming white, which from its great height commanded the plain and near-by town: a lordly, monumental work, modeled after, but surpassing, that tower which long ago had been reared from the plain of Babîl to pierce the skies and provide man with a stairway to the abode of the gods.

"I wonder, Ismeddin, if this Naram-sin built her such a house as this ziggurât?"

"No, master, not like this. And when time comes to an end, and the last man seeks a place to pitch his tent, he must look elsewhere; for no camp will ever be made on the site of *this* ziggurât. Neither the hand of man nor the fires of heaven can ever shake it. Under the lintel——"

"Let *that* be on my head also, even as the unutterable madness of this quest, against which you counseled me in vain. It was so prescribed; and I could but follow the text. And besides, is it not an honor to be immured beneath the lintel of a house built for Sarpanit?"

Landon vaulted to the back of his Barbary stallion; but before starting down the slope, paused to contemplate his work. The sun had dipped below the horizon, so that all was obscure on the plain below, save the loftily towering silver-white masonry of the topmost stage.

"Naram-sin built her no such house. And she came across the Border and danced before him on the moonlit terraces of his ziggurât."

"And the incandescent madness of the Hundred and First Kiss left him seared and lifeless," warned Ismeddin, as he reined up beside the master. "Abandon it now, *saidi*, while you still can."

"No. Neither hell's fire nor the black hands of Iblis can turn me aside. Nothing can stop me."

"You forget, master," suggested Ismeddin, as their horses picked their way down the slope, "that one thing can stop you."

"Yes?"

"Even so. Some girl of the village. Just one slip, and the Infidel's Daughter will not cross the Border, for she is inhumanly jealous."

"The village!"

Landon snorted his contempt.

"You are more of a jester than a darvish, Ismeddin. I left my house in Herat, and the daughter of an emir to follow this madness into *Feringhistan*, to this very spot where you say the avatar shall materialize."

But under his badinage, Landon was troubled at the thought of that which he was attempting, even as a madman in his lucid moments is perturbed by the memory of his obsession.

"No, Haaji, in the entire world there is no woman who can equal her who appeared in my pavilion on the plain of Babîl. Her eyes were a smoldering darkness, and her voice a purring, rippling sweetness. And even yet her perfume lingers in the rug on which she danced."

And then, as he leaned forward in the saddle, the Barbary stallion stretched out in a smooth, extended gallop. At the gate of the ziggurât, Landon reined his horse back on his haunches, and dismounting, tossed the reins to Ismeddin.

An hour later, on emerging from the third stage of the ziggurât, Landon spoke of going to the village to call for mail.

"Which horse will you ride, *saidi*?"

"Neither. I'll walk."

And Ismeddin, who knew that a horse is at times too much company, held his peace. As Landon, on foot, left the ziggurât, the old man opened the outer gate slightly, seated himself cross-legged in the shadow of one of the monstrous winged bulls whose mitered heads upheld the ceiling, and, like the darvish he had once been, entered the silence.

At the post-office Landon found a letter awaiting him. Its seals seemed intact. At the sight of them he frowned, recognizing their device; tore the unopened letter in half, then, pausing, pieced it together and read the fine Persian script of the message from Herat. Once on the street, he

wandered aimlessly. Passers-by avoided him, giving him the paving, shrinking from contact with that lean man and avoiding the mordant glance of those somber eyes.

They called him back to Herat; yet in his native land he was a foreigner, stared at from a distance, a distance which was scrupulously kept.

Landon wandered aimlessly, and wondered, nor heeded the lady of the evening who trailed him and with professional allurements sought to inveigle him. Sought to ensnare him, until, under the glow of a street lamp, she recognized her prospective prey, and recoiled before the somber, fierce eye that for an age-long instant impaled her.

And then he stalked into the smoky air of Tiptoe Inn, seating himself at a table apart from the others, but next to a booth, occupied, as he judged from the murmur of conversation.

Shirazi wine . . . the reek of raw corn whisky from the hills . . . *sandalwood and patchouli* . . . the stench of cigarettes tossed aside to smolder to extinction . . . *the plucked strings of a sitar* . . . the blatant screech and moan of saxophones . . . *the tinkling, mistily spraying fountains of Herat* . . . the raucous, rasping voice of a cabaret singer. . . .

And the Infidel's Daughter, Sarpanit, the Bright and Shining One, was to cross the Border and appear in this strange land. . . .

From the adjoining booth came the purring voice of a woman who spoke with the blurred, indefinable accent of one who speaks many tongues; louder than before, but still softly, suavely, though with the sting and crackle of the lash in each finely enunciated word.

"It is true," she declared, "that all men are jackasses. But to think that I'm listening to the King of Men. No," she resumed, interrupting her companion's protest, "I don't want you nor your damned car, nor your apartment. And that is that!"

"So you've become pious all of a sudden? Perhaps you've forgotten——"

A splash, and a crash of glass.

"You hell-cat. I'll——"

"Go to it. Here's luck!"

Landon glanced up in time to see the high-spirited lady leaving the booth. Trim ankles, and dainty feet; jade ear-pendants, and rebellious, blue-black curls, and a fine, proudly carried head; and though her form was concealed by her cape, Landon knew that only a shapely, well-proportioned woman could achieve that effortless, undulant walk.

"Don't know who she is, but she sounds like a woman after my own heart," reflected Landon. Then he noted that while a few smiled approval as the victrix left the field of battle, there were other groups who scowled and muttered to each other.

That bit of distraction had cracked Landon's introspective gloom, so that on his way back to the ziggurât he had no thought of the letter from Herat, nor of the lurid star which each night progressed farther into the configuration described in the cuneiform tablets. Strange, how in the face of a curious and uncertain doom one can pause to laugh.

As Landon entered the steel-barred gate, Ismeddin emerged from his post in the shadow of the winged bull.

"Master, there was a visitor this evening."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Look!"

And Ismeddin thrust before Landon's eyes a mask of vermilion-colored silk. "The open gate tempted him. And I . . . but I am an old man, and I was unarmed," apologized Ismeddin, "so he lost nothing but his mask."

"Very good, Haaji. You're in *Feringhistan,* where they discountenance private graveyards. If this fellow had been found with a bit of cutlery between his ribs, or a cord about his throat, we might conceivably have some explaining to do. And remember, we're outnumbered, and we're foreigners."

"But in Angor-lana, one evening——"

"I know, Ismeddin. But this is my native land." And Landon smiled sourly.

One night, a week later, Landon thrust aside the three clay tablets which he had been studying, pronouncing after Ismeddin the age-old tongue whose secret they had wrested from the wedge-shaped characters. Landon's wrists and fingers were numb from playing the snakeskin-headed drum, and his brain reeled from the insinuant sorcery of the rhythm he had coaxed therefrom.

"I'll ride tonight, Ismeddin. Suleiman needs exercise. And I need a rest."

A few minutes later the old man led the pawing, belligerent stallion from the stable. Landon mounted and gave the fierce beast his head, letting him pick his course across the moonlit plain. Mile after mile he sped, until finally, lacking the urge of the spur, the stallion slowed down to a walk. Landon, relaxed in the saddle, dozed, and dreamed of Herat, and of the mound at Koyunjik; and mixed into his wandering thoughts, ever recurring in one guise and another, was a girl with trim ankles and jade ear-pendants.

A lurid star flamed over her head . . . and as she set on her blue-black hair a curiously wrought diadem, the piquant irregularity of her features became softened, transfigured into an astonishing loveliness. . . .

The stallion came to an abrupt halt, waking Landon with a jerk. The smell of smoke and smoldering wood and the odor of tar fanned his nostrils. And then he saw why Suleiman had recoiled, snorted, and tossed his head; athwart the path, almost beneath the horse's' hoofs, was a woman, sprawled in a heap, unconscious.

"Steady, lad!" And then, dismounting, he saw that the girl was clad only in a slip of filmy silk, torn, soiled, and clinging in shreds to her lacerated back and sides. Her wrists were pinioned together with a piece of clothes-line. She was still breathing, and stirred faintly at his touch.

"Well, we can't leave her here . . . I'll be damned!"

Landon recognized the girl of Tiptoe Inn, the insouciant one who had a few nights ago so boldly declared herself. As he cut the lashings from her wrists, she opened her eyes, murmured confusedly, shrank from his touch.

"Don't worry, sister. Let's go!" And so saying, he picked up the half-conscious girl, mounted Suleiman, and turned back toward the ziggurât, leaning forward in the saddle, urging the Barbary stallion to a longer stride.

At the gate of the ziggurât, Landon tossed the reins to Ismeddin, who took charge of the foaming Suleiman. In due course, if he so pleased, the Master would say more of the bruised, disheveled burden he had carried into the hall of winged bulls, and up the staircase flanked with parading archers. Nevertheless, the darvish wondered, and as he groomed Suleiman, he smiled, the first time in many weeks; smiled, and hoped that the woman was young and lovely.

"*Bismillahi rrahhmani rrahheem!*" he ejaculated, as he put the finishing touches to Suleiman's silky coat, and

polished his dusty hoofs. "Praise be to God, lord of the worlds! Finding her by chance, and riding back as though the black hands of Abaddon reached out after him. . . . *Saidi,* may this indeed be the daughter of some infidel!"

The old man chuckled at his own play on words, and stroked his white beard.

"Please don't stand on formality," replied the girl, as Landon, half an hour later, knocked at the door of the apartment wherein he had left his guest. "Come right in."

"Well, I didn't want to take you at a disadvantage. How do you feel now?"

"More like myself, thanks to a bit of first aid."

"I fancy we've met before," resumed Landon. "At a distance, that is. In the Tiptoe Inn, a few nights ago. You were laying down the law to some friend, and ended by——"

"Christening him with a ginger ale highball." The girl laughed softly, then continued, "And here you see the result."

She shivered, and drew more closely about herself the brocaded robe in which Landon had wrapped her before leaving her to doctor her bruises and lacerations.

"Oh, but my shoulders ache! Well, and it might have been worse. I just missed a coat of tar and feathers—"

"What?"

"Yes. Just

"So take what is left of him: nothing but skin and bones."

that. But one of the Knights had a kind-hearted streak, so they merely beat me with rawhide whips until I passed out. I don't know how long I was lying there when you found me."

"Must have been an hour or so. Come to think of it, I did smell tar along with the fire, a couple of yards to the side of the path. But what are these Knights, anyway?" demanded Landon, who had never, even in barbarous Angor-lana, seen a slave so mercilessly flogged.

"Surely you've heard of the Knights of the Saffron Mask!"

"No. Tell me."

"You'll hear of them soon enough, if they learn I'm here. They're a secret order—but how in the world have you missed hearing of them? And where am I?" she questioned, glancing about her, and indicating the sculptured and tapestried walls.

"All in due course. Please continue about these Knights," suggested Landon.

"They're self-appointed guardians of public safety and morals, and particularly of Christianity in general. Jews, Catholics, and atheists are their particular aversion, as well as anyone who is inclined to be unconventional. And whoever offends them is introduced to tar, feathers, and the lash. Witness myself. Once in a while they make effective use of rope, and a tall tree."

"Conducting a *jehad* under cover, so to speak?"

"Exactly. Holy war describes the doings of these bigots."

Landon wondered that the girl had understood his phrase, but held his peace.

"Come to think of it, I did hear of them." And he told her of Ismeddin's adventure with the masked intruder the very night of the episode at Tiptoe Inn. "Self-appointed guardians . . . judging from my bit of eavesdropping that night, your friend's propositions weren't any too savory——"

"No. Which was to be expected. Rumor has it that he holds a high command in the order. The rank and file are honest, deluded bigots who serve as a mask for blackmail, rape, murder, arson, or what'll-you-have, perpetrated by their leaders. Extortion, revenge . . . see how the pretty scheme works out? Camouflaged by piety, virtue, and saffron masks."

And Landon wondered greatly, and marveled at the contrasting crudeness and simplicity of the lands of the Moslem, where he had spent so many hard, fierce years.

"Now tell me," resumed the girl, again glancing about her, "where I am."

"Among friends." And Landon struck the small brazen gong at his side.

"Pardon me. I didn't mean to be inquisitive."

"You may as well improvise some clothes," continued Landon, ignoring his guest's apology, "until I can equip you more suitably." He picked up the torn and soiled scrap of silk that his guest had discarded in favor of his lounge-robe. "This is a bit the worse for wear, you know. Tell me where you live, and I'll call for your baggage in the morning."

Just then Ismeddin, in response to the master's summons, entered with a tray.

"Is that all, *saidi?*"

Landon nodded, whereupon the old man left the master and his guest to sip the night-black Abyssinian coffee he had brought in.

"*Allah akbar!* But she is lovely!" he exulted. "Oh, excellent young woman!"

"Lord, what coffee! You *are* a mind-reader, stranger. But no, don't go after my clothes. You'll just

draw the whole pack down on both of us. That clown at Tiptoe Inn surely must hold a high command among the Knights, or they'd never have bothered me. Even if I *am* a cabaret singer. That town's no longer safe for me. They'd drag me out of here if they knew I was here, and as for you, helping me this way——"

"The devil you say!" snorted Landon. "You're safe here till the crack of doom. Unless these fellows get siege guns and batter the place down over our ears. And I'll certainly get you some clothes and whatever else you need."

"Don't be foolish," pleaded the girl. "They don't know I'm here. As long as they don't know, we're safe. I'll make the most of things—yes, I have my nerve, but I simply have to invite myself to stay a few days until this mess quiets down, and I can safely leave."

"Fair enough. Just make yourself at home, if you can stand our queer life. See you in the morning!"

And Landon left his guest to nurse her bruises and make herself as comfortable as she could on her improvised couch of several small silk rugs and a few cushions.

The signs of heaven were approaching the aspect called for in the three tablets; so that even after such an outlandish night, Landon, after leaving his guest, dismissed her from his mind and devoted himself to the rehearsing of the invocations and secret names he was to use in summoning Sarpanit from across the Border. In the seventh stage, high above the plain, face to face with the Lords of the Sign, Landon chanted and beat the tiny drum with knuckles and fingertips until it purred and rolled in that same uncanny rhythm to which the Infidel's Daughter had danced in the pavilion of Koyunjik.

Finally, having reached the end of the ceremonial, Landon arose from his seat at the foot of the altar, gazed through the slits in the vaulted ceiling of the seventh stage and out into the shimmering darkness beyond. In each slit were cross-hairs of fine silver wire so adjusted that at the instant the Lords of the Sign had risen into position, each would be at the intersection of the wires in his particular house: and thus Landon would know that the moment had arrived when the secret name of the Infidel's Daughter was to be pronounced, summoning her into his presence in material form from across the abyss that divides the phantom from its incarnation. And as Landon noted that some of the powers were already approaching their houses, he knew that the others, in the course of but a few days, would swing into the prescribed aspect; knew, and shuddered at the thought of the awful forces which he sought to command, the ruin and ultimate destruction that would be his.

During the next few days Landon saw little of his protegée save at an occasional meal; but those few glimpses were disturbing. The blurred, indefinable accent of her speech stirred a shadowy memory of a memory; and the haunting, half familiarity of her piquant, irregular, almost lovely features upset his poise and self-possession. He found himself from time to time denying with needless vehemence the speech of old Ismeddin, wherein the darvish had suggested that a girl of *Feringhistan* might lure him from his quest of Sarpanit, who was inhumanly jealous.

The girl had amused herself by taking pieces of Hindustani fabrics Landon had given her and improvising quaint, outlandish apparel which seemed to please her enormously: exotic, pagan raiment which made her fit into and become a part of her surroundings.

"You are a clever designer. But you can't wear that outside of the ziggurât. Hadn't I better go to town and get you some clothes in which you could travel?"

"Well . . . yes . . . if I'm in the way . . . or grating on your nerves."

"Oh, not at all," reassured Landon, lying valiantly. "Only, I don't want to keep you here against your best interests. The Knights——"

"Never mind them. Unless I am wearing out my welcome."

"No danger. Just stay away from the seventh stage. And stay away from that bronze door, whatever you do. Otherwise, the place is yours. But remember, keep clear of the seventh stage," concluded Landon solemnly.

That afternoon Landon rode to town for mail which he was not expecting. He returned with a mountainous aggregation of boxes and parcels which by some miracle he contrived to balance on his saddle-bow: civilized apparel, traveling-clothes for his guest, the cabaret girl.

"Ismeddin, take this stuff up to our guest," he commanded.

"Very well, *saidi,*" agreed the old man. But for such an agile, sprightly veteran, Ismeddin was strangely clumsy and feeble in his attempts to collect and shoulder the assortment of packages.

"Never mind," countermanded Landon, "I'll take them up in the morning."

And that night, after Landon had gone to the seventh stage to pass through the purification by water and fire, the girl and the darvish met in what she called her throne-room.

"Thanks for the coffee, Ismeddin. But that's not why I rang for you."

"To hear is to obey, *bibi!*"

"Then sit down and listen to me. The master brought home a load of traveling-clothes for me this evening——"

"Who am I to say?" evaded Ismeddin.

"You needn't say. I know what I know. Now tell me the truth: just how anxious is the master to get me out of here?"

Ismeddin marveled that he could no more resist that girl's compelling eye than he could the master's. And strangely, he did not resent the fact.

"I will tell you the truth. Your presence disturbs the master's studies."

"Indeed?"

The girl's eyebrows rose in saracenic arches; and she smiled as one who is more pleased than amused.

"Then tell me, Ismeddin," she purred in the rippling syllables of a language the darvish had not heard for many months, "tell me what manner of studies he pursues, and how I could possibly disturb his meditations. You can trust me, Ismeddin," she continued, ignoring his amazement at hearing that unexpected language, "and speak to me freely. For I have seen and heard, without having intended to eavesdrop. And I know that you were pleased at my arrival; even as I know also that you did not care to bring me my traveling-clothes this evening . . . oh, but it is very strange, Haaj Ismeddin . . . yet I know many things . . . so tell me more, wise Haaji . . . what manner of studies does the master pursue, and how could I disturb him?"

Again her eyebrows rose in pointed arches; and her eyes smoldered through their long lashes. Loyalty to the master melted under that mordant, burning gaze; reticence and reserve fell asleep, drugged by those rippling, caressing tones of a familiar tongue.

". . . And thus it is," concluded the darvish, "that the master fears that

even your presence in the very basements of this tower would arouse the inhuman jealousy of Sarpanit whom he seeks to summon from across the Border; fears that she will not reveal herself in human form; fears that he will be cheated of his doom and robbed of the fiery destruction of the Hundred and First Kiss which in the end she bestows on her lovers."

"And you, Haaji?" murmured the girl. Strangely enough, she had heard the old man's mad tale of the Infidel's Daughter without surprize or amazement, accepting it as of all things in the world the most logical and reasonable. "And you, Haaj Ismeddin, do you share his fears?"

"I? By the black hands of Abaddon! If you could only save him from himself! Whoever and whatever you are, *bibi* . . . if only . . . but no; you could not even pass the brazen door tomorrow night. Your presence there, in that holy of unholies, would break the powerful spell he intends to chant; and she would not cross the Border. But your being in any other place in this ziggurât would not suffice. And a hundred men could not batter down that heavy door, nor the most cunning smith pick its locks and bars——"

"*Once it is closed,* no." The girl smiled, and patted her dusky coiffure. "And I will not leave in the morning as he designs, Haaji. . . ."

"ISMEDDIN," began Landon the next morning, as the old man entered with the master's meal of barley cakes and water, "how long must one shelter a stranger who has eaten one's bread and salt?"

"Your enemy may stay three days; and for a whole day after his departure you may not pursue him."

"But this girl is not my enemy. Though her presence——"

"*Saidi,* as long as she does not enter the seventh stage, her presence makes no difference. So that though she can now leave in safety, you can scarcely send her away. Lawfully, yes; but when did you ever urge a guest to leave? You are not of *Feringhistan;* you could not ask a guest to leave, *saidi.* And she does no harm. If she should enter the seventh stage . . . but she can not do that."

And then the girl herself entered Landon's apartment.

"How can I ever thank you? Those clothes are really adorable. Only . . . forgive me for mentioning it . . . I simply couldn't leave here barefooted."

"Barefooted? Why, I included shoes!"

"Then you must have lost them on the road. I'm so sorry."

"I'll replace them tomorrow. No trouble whatever. But in the meanwhile," concluded Landon, pausing at the door, "I'll be very busy. Surely you'll pardon my haste?"

Ismeddin, following the master, wondered what had become of the pair of shoes that had fallen from a mountainous heap of parcels he had that morning carried to the girl's apartment.

"It is written, *saidi,*" observed the old man. "She must stay another day. Surely you could not send her away barefooted."

"Very well then. But tomorrow morning . . . no matter what happens tonight——"

"I understand, *saidi.* If *she* appears from across the Border, the girl will leave."

IT WAS late that night when Landon, in the seventh stage of the ziggurât, completed the final purification by passing through fire. And then, barefooted, and robed in purple, he stepped into the center of a circle of powdered cinnabar which flamed

luridly in the violet light of the adytum of the Infidel's Daughter. On his head was a three-storied miter woven of purple plumage; on his wrists were bracelets of silver, and around his throat he wore a collar of hammered bronze. In his right hand he carried a diadem of curiously wrought silver, and in his left was a tiny drum whose head was of serpent's hide.

At the center of the circle he knelt, bowed low in obeisance, then rose, and advancing toward the altar of unsculptured stone, placed thereon the drum and the diadem.

"Infidel's Daughter, this is the drum to whose cadence you shall dance to the evening star, on the terraces of the house which I have built for you; and this is the diadem you shall wear when you reign in this house which rises to the heavens to meet you: and all this is proof that I sought you on the Mount of the Infidel as you commanded."

Then, inclining his head for a moment, he retreated to the circle of cinnabar, raised his arms, and began his invocation; haltingly at first, and then more surely and firmly as the spirit of those ancient words overcame him.

"Flaming lords of the two horizons and watchers of the treble gates, stand one at the right and one at the left as the star of Sarpanit rises to his throne and rules over his sign," he intoned as he gazed through the central cruciform cleft in the ceiling, looking out into blackness beyond that great height. "And you, dark princes of Aralû, open the gates of that dim land where you keep her imprisoned, and release her once more to spread gladness and wo without end over this earth which dries and wanes, lacking her presence. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye, dark lords and shining presences, and by your secret names which I know and can pronounce, hear ye and obey my will."

Pausing in his invocation, he drew from a pouch at his girdle a small vial whose contents he poured in a circle about him, concentric to, and within the circle of cinnabar. And as the fluid touched the floor, it burst into quivering, lapping flames whose spectral blueness exhaled a poison-sweetness which overwhelmed the dense fumes rising from the censers that smoldered at each side of the altar.

"*Belît Nûri,*" he resumed, "light of heaven and earth, Sarpanit, shining torch of heaven, return from Aralû! Seven times and seven times have I passed through fire; food have I not eaten; sorrow was my nourishment; water have I not drunk; grief was for my thirst. I am Adôn, for whom you wept; I am the Lord of the Great House; I am the builder of the Ziggurât; and it is I who call you from Aralû, from the gloomy realm of Ereshkigal; it is I who summon you from across the Border, *Belît Nûri,* Lady of Light!"

Statuesquely, with formal precision, he made gestures reminiscent of the mitered kings who in the lower halls of the ziggurât rode to battle and poured libations on lofty altars. And all the while he chanted in that dim, forgotten tongue, summoning the Infidel's Daughter from across the Border.

"It is I who seek you, *Bint el Kafir* who danced before me on the mound of Koyunjik; therefore ride on your lions past the throne of Allatu, and appear before me, Sarpanit, Bright and Shining One!"

The Lord of the Sign rose into the predicted configuration. Great clouds of purple smoke, choking and blinding, rose from the censers and overwhelmed Landon with their awful sweetness; but still he chanted. And then as the star hung for an instant

on the silver cross-hair in the cleft, flaming like an incandescent bead on a string of light, he raised his arms and called in a great voice that final word, the uttermost and hidden name of the Infidel's Daughter: "Come from across the Border, *Kadishtu!*"

The blue flames shrank into blackness. Landon collapsed, sprawling across the edge of the cinnabar circle. His three-staged miter rolled to the foot of the altar. Uncrowned, and mocked by the star that flamed its way up the silver cross-hair, Landon lay senseless in the darkness of the shrine sacred to the Bright and Shining One.

3

THAT very evening, shortly after nightfall, the Knights of the Saffron Mask met in secret conclave. Under cover of darkness they slunk in pairs down side streets and alleys, uncouth figures in robes and miters, converging in all directions toward their rendezvous in the basement of a house at the outskirts of the village.

"Good evening, Brethren," greeted the Grand Master with punctilious solemnity as he ascended the rostrum. "Be seated."

Whereat the Knights took seats and respectfully awaited the opening of the Book of Seals, wherein were inscribed not only the rules and minutes of the Order, but also, in the appendix, the names of offenders, actual as well as prospective; the list of the proscribed, and the proceedings instituted against them.

"Tonight," began the Grand Master, "we shall try and sentence this Landon whose manifold iniquities have become a disgrace and a scandal to this Christian community. Brethren, what is your good pleasure?"

"Let him be tried," intoned forty voices in the monotone of a litany; "and let him be sentenced; and let this sentence be forthwith executed."

"Who prefers a charge?"

A dozen robed figures leaped to their feet.

With a gesture the Grand Master yielded the floor to one of them.

"Master," began the Knight, "this man is an infidel; he worships the sun and moon and the hosts of heaven."

"What proof have you?" demanded the Grand Master.

"I've seen him on the terraces of his tower, making strange gestures to the evening star, and bowing to the morning star."

"For this he shall be stripped and flogged and driven from the county," decreed the Master.

"Let it be recorded," chanted the assemblage in unison.

The Scribe at the Grand Master's elbow wrote on the pages of the Book of Seals.

"What further charges?" demanded the chief, and again singled out one of those who had taken the floor.

"He's an atheist. One day when he was riding through town, the parson invited him to attend church; and this Landon thanked him with supercilious politeness, but told him he didn't believe in churches."

And before the Scribe could record this charge, another Knight assumed the floor.

"This man is a blasphemer: he claims his tower will outlast the world itself."

"H-m-m . . . yes, that is blasphemy. Scribe, did you get that?" demanded the Grand Master, lapsing from the stilted phrases of the ritual. "What else have we got on this fellow?"

"He's living with that de las Torres woman we ran out of town a while ago," ventured another, un-

easily as though picking his way over quicksands.

"The devil he is!" flared the Grand Master. "How do you know?"

"Well, me and Judson were watching that tower with a field-glass one evening, and we saw her dancing on the what did you call it——"

"Terrace?"

"Yeah. Terrace, that's the word. Something like a Hula dance, only worse. And what little clothes she did wear was scandalous."

"So that bird found herself a home, did she? After we told her to clear out?"

"Ain't nothin' else but that, Master."

"Did he get our warning letter, telling him to get rid of the girl?"

"Sure did, Master. I saw him at the post-office, readin' it, and then he tore it up and grinned. And a couple of days later, he came to town to get her some clothes and trappings."

"Enough!" thundered the Grand Master, resuming his dignity. "Order, please! We have enough to hang this fellow a dozen times. And especially the girl, the way she was corrupting the town."

At this last remark, several Knights turned their masked faces and choked coughs which sounded strangely like snickers.

"We'll take the place by surprize. Tonight. He has only that one old man for a servant. Right?"

"You said it, Master. But he's a hard old duffer. Nearly strangled me one night I tried to look into things while his boss was away," replied one of the forty.

"Does he always leave his front door open?" continued the Grand Master.

"Used to. But now he keeps it barred."

"Any secret entrances or exits from which he could escape?"

"There used to be," announced a Knight who had worked as a laborer during the construction of the ziggurât. "But they've been blocked up."

"Well, then we've got him sewed up," declared the Master. "But how about that front door? I hear it's made of heavy steel bars we couldn't saw in a month of Sundays."

"That's simple," volunteered one of the conclave. "I'll take an acetylene torch from my shop, and we can cut those bars in a few minutes, even if they're a couple of inches thick. Easy enough."

"Very good, Brother. All of you, at 2 a. m., be prepared to raid him. We'll tar and feather the both of them. Or, while we're at it . . . yes, bring some rope; we might change our minds. Remember, we start from here at 2 a. m. Dismissed!"

The Knights rose and bowed; the Grand Master acknowledged their reverence; and the conclave dissolved.

"To hell with the man," muttered the Grand Master as he stepped from the rostrum. "It's that hell-cat's hide *I* want." And he wiped his chin in memory of a certain tête-à-tête in a booth at Tiptoe Inn.

4

A SLENDER, nebulous presence emerged from the shadows of the holy of holies of the seventh stage of the ziggurât, coming from behind the hangings to the left of the altar and picking its way through the gloom. The apparition paused at the altar steps and one by one struck light to the fifteen sacred candles before the shrine. Then, turning from the altar, the girl knelt beside the ziggurât builder.

"Couldn't you wait . . . did you have to cross the Border to meet her?"

The touch of her fingertips and the murmur of her voice aroused Landon.

"Sarpanit . . . Bright and Shining One . . ." he muttered as he opened his eyes. Then, collecting himself, and in the flickering light of the candles recognizing his protègée: "You! What are *you* doing here? Flames and damnation!" he thundered, rising and snatching the girl to her feet, "You and your curiosity! . . . Meddling fool!" he continued; and then, releasing her wrist, glared at her, transfixing her for an age-long instant with the mordant hatred of his eyes. "If strangling you would do any good . . ."

A petty rage is expressed in violence; but a great wrath can not quite conceive the vengeance for which it blindly gropes: so that Landon, instead of tearing his evil genius into small pieces, seated himself wearily on the altar steps, head bowed in despair, shoulders drooping with the burden of adventurous years, perilous quests, soul-racking studies and speculations; beaten, cracked, broken; a colossus shattered by an idle gust of wind.

"Sarpanit . . . Bright and Shining One . . . I have failed you. . . ."

"You *have* failed me," breathed a voice at his side, speaking in the rippling, forgotten tongue of Agade. "Looked me full in the face and did not see me. . . . Look again, *Adôn! Adôn,* for whom I once went into mourning, in another avatar. . . ."

The girl took the silver diadem from the altar, set it upon the abysmal blackness of her hair, patted her dusky coiffure, and smilingly regarded Landon. The piquant irregularity of her features was softening into a loveliness the like of which he had seen but once before: the cabaret girl he had a moment before cursed as his evil genius was before his very eyes merging her identity with that of the apparition which had once danced in the pavilion on the mound of Koyunjik. The girl and the vision were fusing into one, into a radiant and unbelievable beauty.

"*Bint el Kafir!*" Landon stared incredulously as one who has thrust upon him in one swift moment all the confusion and doubt of a lifetime. "Infidel's Daughter . . . and yet a moment ago . . . Sarpanit!"

And before that unearthly radiance Landon sank to his knees, stricken with an overwhelming wonder; forgetful of all save the transfiguration, the immeasurable loveliness of the Infidel's Daughter, whose low voice murmured incredible words.

"You have seen, and now you believe. Ismeddin sought to save you from your fate by putting your computations in error, so that the stars to which you chanted your mummeries were not those that ruled my avatar. Yet he knew that by the force of your desire you might call me from across the Border; and thus, despite his deception, he was uneasy, and conspired with the cabaret girl, your guest, to tempt you from Sarpanit incarnate and tangible. But it made little difference what you said, what rites you performed or omitted, what stars were at the zenith or nadir. I am here, *Adôn,* as I promised. . . ."

Landon raised his eyes, then dropped them before the increasing splendor and glory of the Infidel's Daughter.

"It mattered little," she continued, "for the force of your desire and the spell of your vision sufficed. I danced before you in your pavilion at Koyunjik, and sang to you of the Hundred and One Strange Kisses. And I whispered in your ear the missing name, the hidden name which even Ismeddin did not know . . . *Kadishtu.* . . . Now do you believe?

"Thus *despite* the mummeries you performed, *despite* the ziggurât you built, I came from across the Border and assumed mortal form. Therefore rise, and admire the full splendor of that which you yourself created: *for there are no gods save only those created by the fancy of man.*"

And Landon, godlike and exalted, rose to claim the first of the Hundred and One Strange Kisses.

5

In accordance with their plan, the saffron-robed avengers gathered in the grove about the ziggurât, and in double column marched to the massive gate which, as they had expected, was locked and barred.

One of the Knights drew from beneath his robe a small cylinder of acetylene; another had regulating valves, a torch, and hose; and finally, a small cylinder of compressed oxygen. These parts were swiftly assembled; then the striking of a match, and a broad flare of flame which diminished in size and increased in intensity as the oxygen was cut in: so that when it was adjusted, there was but a fine pencil of blue-white flame, an eighth of an inch long, but of dazzling, unearthly brilliance. The Knights averted their faces as one of their number advanced with the hissing tip of flame and applied it to one of the bars. A tiny spot on the metal became red-hot; and then, as the operator released the cutting jet, a shower of incandescent steel sprayed onto the paving; and in a few seconds the bar was cut clean as though sawed through. Again and again the torch was applied, until five bars were cut. And then the flame was cut off, leaving the darkness trebly black by contrast.

The avengers paused, awestricken by the black depths beyond them.

"Follow me!" commanded the Grand Master, stepping forward into the breach.

One of the Knights flashed an electric torch. Another followed suit. Slim pencils of light revealed a staircase leading to the second stage of the ziggurât. Noiseless as shadows they picked their way up thickly carpeted steps.

Not a word was whispered. The silence hung like an oppressing fog. And then the Knights, emerging on the second stage of the ziggurât, found themselves in a room pervaded with a pale, shimmering twilight, which revealed the ascent to the succeeding stage, flanked by grim, foreboding figures of winged bulls whose human heads, bearded and mitered, stared solemnly at the invaders.

Out of the shadows leaped a white-bearded apparition: Ismeddin, seeing that flight was impossible, was determined to render a good account of himself. Twice he fired; and then his pistol jammed. His long-bladed kanijar rose and fell in the melée, until the tap of a blackjack swept away the old man's senses in one paralyzing instant.

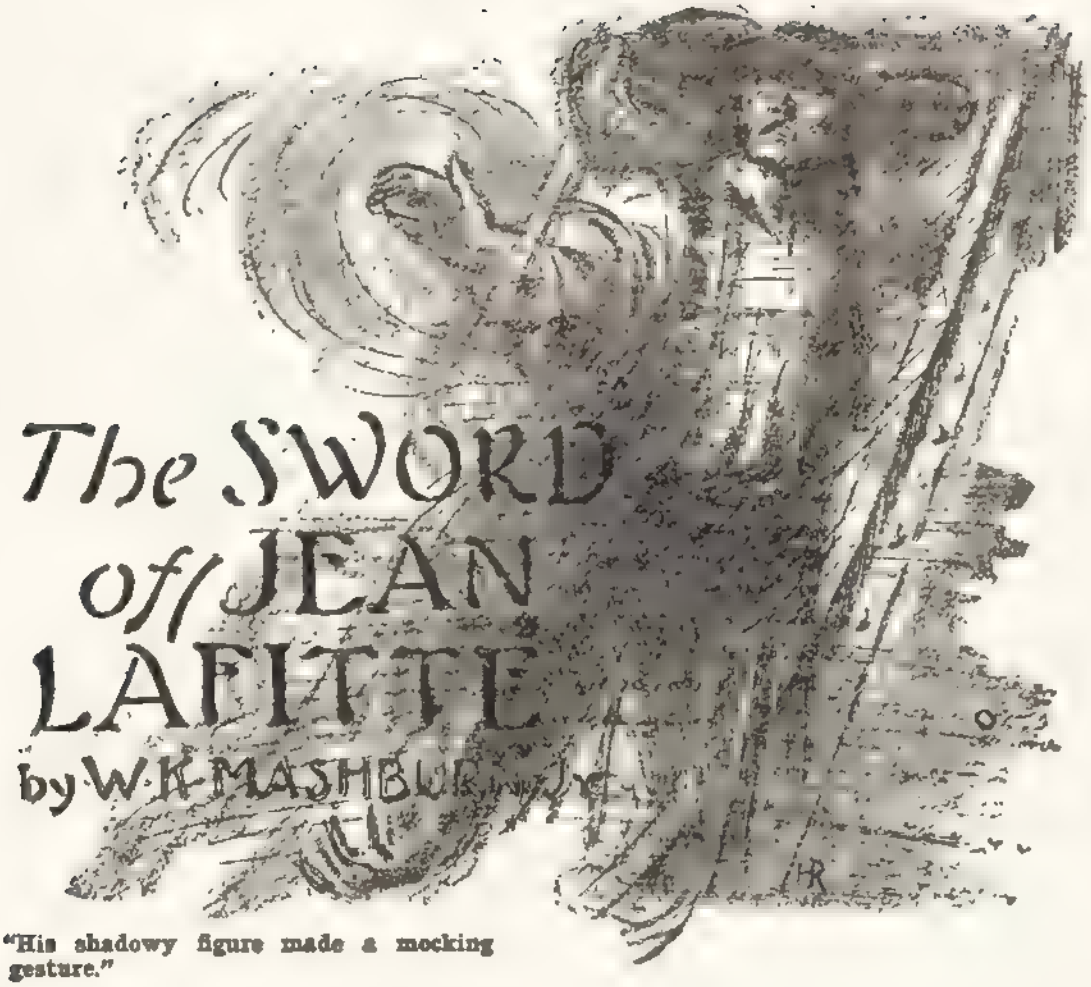
The wounded were carried to the ground level; the remainder advanced, searching each apartment of the lower stages, working their way up, stage by stage, to the last, at whose great door they paused.

Out of the silence came the rich tones of him they sought, lifting his voice in sonorous, foreign accents: and then the tinkle of bracelets, and a woman's laughter.

"We've got them both!" exulted the Grand Master. He tried the door; found it barred. "Bring on the torch!"

Again that fierce flame flared wide, and then drew down to a pencil of

(Continued on page 860)



"His shadowy figure made a mocking gesture."

MY ACQUAINTANCE with Jean Lafitte, in the beginning, was of the most casual nature. In short, my household was one of a considerable number that maintained the prosperity of his really excellent grocery.

When, shortly after the removal of my residence to New Orleans, I discovered the name of the grocer with whom my wife had established trade, it impressed me as being singularly unsuited to his occupation. As a matter of fact, I thought it ridiculous that any commonplace career should appeal to one who bore the name, and who, my wife informed me, claimed descent of, that olden Robin Hood of Barataria.

I am possessed of a romantic streak which even the exigencies of modern business have not been entirely able to overcome, and for some time this led me into the habit of personally settling my monthly account at Lafitte's.

I was not disappointed with Lafitte's personal appearance, for he proved to be a small, courtly-mannered individual, with excellently modeled head and features. A slightly swarthy complexion but served to set off his fine eyes to better advantage, although I observed a touch of pathos in their depths, and an expression of faintly bitter resignation, which I then could not account for. I had the explanation, some time aft-

erward, when I accidentally discovered that the parish records vouchsafed descent to my grocer, not from the gallant Jean, but from his less appealing brother, Pierre Lafitte, and a mulatto mistress. Such lack of fastidiousness on the pirate's part promptly dispelled my fanciful interest in his progeny, and thereafter I substituted the use of the mails for the payment of my grocery bills, instead of presenting my checks in person.

More than a year passed, following the cessation of my periodic visits to his establishment, before I again (as I thought) came into contact with the grocer, under peculiar circumstances. I happened to be hunting ducks at the time, near the eastern reaches of Barataria Bay, and it struck me as a singular coincidence that I should find him in the same country where his picturesque ancestor once held sway.

I had become separated from the other members of my party, and the realization that I had hopelessly lost my bearings was gradually forced upon me. In attempting to retrace my steps toward the distant quarter in which I believed my companions to be, I was further confused to come upon a small bayou, which failed to impress me with any sense of familiarity.

While engaged in seeking a place where the heavy, sluggish water was shallow enough for me to wade across in my hip-boots without the necessity of a thorough wetting, I was relieved to observe the figure of what I took to be another hunter, upon the opposite side of the bayou.

I SUCCEEDED in crossing the stream without much difficulty, and hastened to accost the stranger—about whom there was something vaguely familiar. As I approached him, it suddenly dawned upon me that he was none other than that Jean Lafitte who sold me groceries. Simultaneously, I observed that his nondescript and yet picturesque attire would more appropriately have served that other Lafitte, who possibly stood upon the same ground when Barataria was a pirate stronghold.

A long, sleeveless cloak, curiously faded and weathered, and conveying an impression of impossible age, draped from his shoulders to below the tops of equally aged leather knee-boots. A broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, of apparently the same vintage as cloak and boots, drooped over the sallow face, where care appeared to have graven deeper lines than I remembered.

I thought, for a moment, that the fellow seemed vexed as I hailed him. He hesitated for a perceptible instant, and then, slightly shrugging his shoulders, answered my greeting civilly enough, although without cordiality.

"I am certainly glad to see you, Lafitte," I said, and observed that he gave a slight start as I pronounced the name, and regarded me with uncalled-for surprize.

"Indeed, *Monsieur?*" he questioned.

Lafitte spoke English with the curious inflection so often encountered in the southern parishes of Louisiana, even upon the tongues of some who are of a third or fourth generation of born Americans. He had never before addressed me as "*Monsieur*", however, and the use of the French title struck me as an affectation, possibly impelled by some conceit associated with his present surroundings.

"I surely am," I affirmed. "I've been floundering around in this confounded swamp all morning, and just about decided that I don't know where I am. I haven't even heard a gunshot for the last hour or more."

"In which direction does *Monsieur* desire to proceed?" asked Lafitte.

"Back to that so-called railroad, at Le Boeuf station," I informed him, conscious of a rising distaste for his continued use of the French mode of address.

"That is fortunate," nodded Lafitte, "for I am bound in the same general direction, and I shall be more than pleased to guide *Monsieur* to Le Boeuf."

There it was again, and my rather childish irritation gave vent to expression as I reminded him, a trifle shortly,

"You've sold me enough groceries as *Mister* Stuart to be able to get along without all that '*Monsieur*' foolishness, haven't you, Lafitte?"

I was immediately ashamed of the outburst, for which there was little enough real reason, but consoled myself with the reflection that the damned nigger—even if he was almost white—was a bit too fond of histrionics.

None the less, my rebuke produced a dangerous gleam in Lafitte's deep eyes, and he stiffened ominously. The appearance of swiftly mounting wrath gave way, however, to an almost immediate expression of quizzical surprize, and what appeared to be sudden and amused comprehension. I confess to a distinct relief at seeing the blaze die out of those brilliant eyes, for the momentary flash, brief as it was, had given me a glimpse of something potentially dangerous in their depths. I repeat, therefore, that I experienced a relief even disproportionate to the incident when Lafitte lifted his shoulders in their habitual gesture and smiled, amusedly—a little contemptuously, I have since believed.

"So," he queried, "you buy groceries from one Jean Lafitte, in New Orleans, and, because you consider him a very commonplace person, object that I—he—finds it natural, so close to Barataria Bay, to speak in the fashion of that—that *other*—Jean Lafitte?"

I answered him with his own trick, by shrugging my shoulders, whereat he faintly smiled again, and nodded.

"Please pardon my unwitting offense, Mr. Stuart. One will surely be safe in asserting that Jean Lafitte—the grocer—highly values your good will."

I was strongly suspicious that the rascal found something in his last statement to furnish him secret amusement; but I could not be sure, so offered no comment beyond a noncommittal grunt.

The fact was that Lafitte impressed me in a curious and vaguely disquieting manner. I was at a loss to account for the indefinable antipathy his presence inspired in me; for even in Barataria, and despite what I then considered his theatrical manner, I refused to regard him as other than a moderately prosperous grocer—and a not-quite-white grocer, at that.

We trudged on in silence for a while, Lafitte setting a course almost at right angles to the direction I had been following. Finally, partly as a relief to the monotonous lack of conversation, which my guide seemed indifferently disposed to remedy, and partly to shake off the unreasonable disquiet which I experienced in his proximity, I hazarded a remark.

"I did not know you were in the habit of taking holidays in the Barataria country, Lafitte," I said.

"Nor am I," was his grave reply. "I have not had a holiday, in Barataria or elsewhere, in more years than you would be likely to credit, should I tell you just how many."

"Does one flounder through these swamps on business, then?" I asked, with a short laugh. At the same time, I noticed a fact that had previously escaped my definite attention:

in addition to his queer attire, neither was Lafitte armed for hunting, as well as I was able to determine.

"More men have sought these swamps with serious intent than have come for pleasure," moodily answered Lafitte, breaking the thread of my thoughts. There was another flash of that latent ferocity I had previously noted as he added, "Some few have come to bide here the hour of vengeance!"

I made no comment; nor did Lafitte seem to expect any. I could make neither heads nor tails of his erratic talk, and, what with the wild and positively uncanny expression that frequently replaced the air of calm melancholy I had grown to associate with him, I began to entertain an uneasy suspicion that the fellow might be more or less unbalanced mentally—although the idea was certainly discounted by what I knew of him.

At about this time, however, I was further perplexed to observe that, although we were almost constantly on boggy ground, and frequently wading in mud or shallow water, Lafitte's boots and long cloak were utterly free of any stain in witness of the fact. The full shock of this phenomenon did not strike me until I afterward recalled it, in the light of later events. My attention was diverted, at the moment, by the appearance of the Mississippi River levee, which confronted us as we broke through a concealing patch of tall sugar-cane.

The wretched little railroad track ran almost in the shadow of the levee, and Lafitte informed me that Le Boeuf station was only about two miles above us, around the bend of the river. He suggested that I might see for myself from the embankment, and as its summit furnished an easy and natural highway to my destination, we made the ascent.

Sure enough, I discerned the settlement at no great distance up the river.

At this juncture, Lafitte called my attention to a vessel that was rounding a lower bend of the great river which rolled majestically below us, and forging slowly upstream in our direction. His face retained a mask of impassivity, but his eyes were like glowing coals, alive with suppressed but exultant excitement.

Examining the craft, which was smaller than the usual ships of commerce, and yet had one funnel more than is customary, I remarked to Lafitte that she seemed to be some sort of small warship. This fact, in itself, afforded me no clue to the reason of his interest, but he nodded an eager affirmative.

"Ah!" he exclaimed; "a warship, indeed! And does *Monsieur* observe the flag she flaunts?"

"Why yes," I acknowledged, after a moment's further gazing, "it is the Mexican flag; and, as we are expecting her arrival for general overhauling in the dry dock of my company at Algiers, I assume her to be the gunboat *Tampico*."

"It *is* the *Tampico*," agreed Lafitte. It did not occur to me to ask how he came to be so assured of this fact, since I happened to know that the gunboat carried no nameplate—and even if it had, he could not possibly have made it out at that distance. Instead, I remarked as an afterthought:

"It is quite possible that I shall go with her when she returns to Mexico, if the authorities will permit it. Her commander is an old friend of mine, and he has several times asked me to make a voyage with him. As I have to go to Vera Cruz, anyway, to inspect another gunboat before placing a bid to repair it also, I may take advantage of his offer at this time."

To my great surprize, Lafitte vehemently shook his head, and urged,

"Do not follow your plan, *Monsieur*—you *must* not!"

Displeased at the receipt of such peremptory advice, I was upon the point of making a curt reply, but the fellow was so evidently in earnest that curiosity concerning his motive in objecting to a plan that did not in the least concern him, led me to question him.

"Pray, why not?" I demanded.

"Because," slowly answered Lafitte, "Captain Manuel de Ruiz, your friend and the gunboat's commander, *is marked for the vengeance of Jean Lafitte!*"

I do not know what reply I made to this amazing statement, or whether I said anything at all, but I do know that my last doubt as to Lafitte's mental condition left me, then and there. Probably he understood my thought, which would make clear his reason for explaining to me as much as he did—although why *he* should care for my opinion is beyond me.

"*Monsieur,*" he began, "they will tell you that Jean Lafitte—*the* Jean Lafitte—perished in Galveston; or at sea, under the guns of this or that man-of-war—some say an American, and some say an English vessel. But they are wrong! When an American warship bombarded Galveston, of which Lafitte was then governor, it is true that he was forced to flee the island. But he fled, *Monsieur,* not to sea, where every man's hand was against him, but to the mainland.

"The fugitive governor sought sanctuary in old Mexico, where he had many friends. But, alas! he had also many enemies, and treachery brought him full into the eager clutches of the chief of them all: one Don Manuel de Ruiz, the governor of Matamoras."

Lafitte's face contracted with a spasm of fierce and somehow terrifying hate at the mention of the name, and he broke off his narrative to glare malevolently at the approaching gunboat.

"De Ruiz was not one to pass by the opportunity to settle an old grudge," he continued, "which was only the more bitter because unjust. His end was attained by the simple and expedient use of a firing squad, unattended by such superfluous trifles as formality or pretense of justice."

"But where," I interposed, "is your authority for such statements? With proof, your story becomes an important contribution to history; but without such proof—and that of a very definite nature—it remains nothing more than another of many interesting tales about the same subject."

"*Monsieur,*" replied Lafitte, with an enigmatic expression in his eyes, and contempt in his voice, "I, *who know,* tell you what is the truth. Proof I have none; but I do not seek to write history, and I am little concerned with what fate history may assign to Jean Lafitte. What does concern me is the fact that, as the Mexican governor's ragged *soldados* riddled his body with an uneven volley, Lafitte cursed de Ruiz with his final breath, *and swore vengeance on him, and all who bore his name after him!* And, *Monsieur,* the last de Ruiz, the great-grandson and namesake of the murderer of Jean Lafitte, commands that teakettle, yonder."

"At any rate," I remarked a trifle maliciously, "he does command it, so that Lafitte's curse can not have been entirely efficacious."

"Ah!" snarled my fanciful grocer (I still thought of him in that light, and found the fact amusing), with an air of baffled rage. "Yet, *Monsieur,* the original de Ruiz sickened and died of a malady that baffled his physicians, shortly after the 'execution' of his enemy. The Mexican had laughed at Lafitte's curse, but there were those who remembered and

shuddered, and peons who crossed themselves with dread, when the governor shrieked the Baratarian's name in the last agony of death!"

THERE was a pause, while the speaker seemed to be reviewing a personal knowledge of the event he had just described, so detached and earnest was his expression. There was about him, also, an air of gloating over that knowledge; but, even so, I could not forbear another sly gibe at his story.

"Yet, his great-grandson prospers," I remarked. "He is still a young man, and he will be a power in Mexico, some day, if he lives."

"If he lives," significantly agreed Lafitte. He regarded me for a moment with a stony stare. "Would you know why he lives—why, indeed, his family was not wiped out long before he was born? Then, *Monsieur,* I will tell you: it is because they buried the sword of Jean Lafitte with his great-grandfather!"

I think that I snorted outright at this statement, but Lafitte continued his remarkable narrative without seeming to notice.

"The superstition of the governor's wife, who had a carefully ignored strain of Indian blood in her veins, caused her to seek counsel of her old Indian nurse, and the old *ama* advised her mistress to do a strange thing. There is, or was, *Monsieur,* a belief among some of the native tribes of old Mexico, that if a warrior's weapons be buried with his slayer, the malignant spirit of the former would be bereft of much of its power to harm either the spirit of his foe, when death should claim him also, or those living ones beloved of that foe. . . .

"*Monsieur,* there is often wisdom in what is termed the superstition of ignorant savages! Since the death of that old de Ruiz, his descendents have struggled against something more than mere ill fortune, and they have never greatly prospered in the end—but, at least, they have survived, thanks to the 'superstition' of an old Indian woman."

I was strongly tempted to laugh, but something checked the impulse. By now, I was firmly convinced that there was a very decided quirk in my grocer's mental make-up. His appearance and manner, as well as his extraordinary conversation, caused me to wonder if his present visit to the old haunts of his pirate ancestor had not, through an association of ideas, finally developed a previously obscure obsession, and caused him to confuse the identity, as well as the real or fancied wrongs, of that other Jean Lafitte with his own. I remember, also, that I found time to be amused that his vanity had caused him to ignore the fact that he had less to do with Jean Lafitte than with his brother, Pierre.

I decided to be on my way to Le Boeuf, and thanked my guide for his services. He courteously assured me of his pleasure at having been of some slight assistance, and then added a final admonition against my proposed trip aboard the *Tampico.*

"A revolution brews in Mexico, *Monsieur,*" he gravely informed me, "and strange things often happen when the passions of men are set loose, like wolves, to harrass their fellows. The gates of hell have waited overlong for Jean Lafitte, and I have a premonition that his buried sword shall again see the light. Keep off de Ruiz's tinpot, *Monsieur!*"

I should certainly have answered him in short and impatient fashion, except that, with a final courtly bow, Lafitte turned and climbed swiftly down the levee, and vanished into the cane patch through which we had recently come.

I WATCHED him go with a feeling strangely like relief, and vaguely noticed that the tall, close-growing cane stalks did not even waver to mark his passage. I thought nothing of that fact at the time, and, dismissing my late guide with a shrug, I turned toward Le Boeuf.

It was then midafternoon, and I found on arrival at the settlement that my companions had not yet returned from the hunt. As I had eaten nothing since a very early breakfast, my first interest was to satisfy my hunger. Afterward, my mind was chiefly occupied with the attempt to invent some sort of excuse plausible enough to forestall, or at least diminish, the inevitable chaffing to which I should soon be subjected for losing myself—to say nothing of my failure to bag a single duck.

For this reason, I completely forgot my encounter with Lafitte, for the time being, and so made no mention of it to the rest of the party. When it later recurred to me, back home in New Orleans, I casually remarked to my wife that she need not be surprized to hear, at any time, that her grocer had been committed to a lunatic asylum. Naturally, this statement called for explanation, and when I had given it in complete detail, my better half regarded me with a quizzical air.

"You don't mean that all this happened three days ago?" she asked.

I nodded agreement, unsuspecting of the surprize in store for me.

"Then *you* had better be careful," dryly commented my wife, "because I happen to know that Lafitte was run down and rather severely injured by an automobile, *ten* days ago, and has been confined to his bed ever since!"

"Bunk!" I scoffed. "He may have been hurt, but he was surely up and out last Saturday."

"It's not bunk, and he wasn't up," insisted my wife, "because I went to the store Saturday afternoon to select some things personally, and Dr. Marvin was there at the same time. I heard one of the clerks ask him how long it would be before Lafitte would be able to get about, and the doctor told him that it would be ten days or two weeks. I shouldn't be at all surprized," was her added and somewhat severe comment, "if your duck-hunting party was like some of the fishing parties you and your precious friends go on."

"Not a drop," I hastily assured her, "not a single drop!"

I was answered with an eloquent sniff, and I was aware that the subject was better dropped. While my wife is probably the finest woman in the world, and ordinarily reasonable, those of my readers who have been married for any length of time will at once understand my aversion to debate with her, along certain lines.

In the meantime, the *Tampico* had been put in our dry dock that very day, and I was so busily engaged in superintending the preparations for her speedy repairing that I again forgot my adventure in the Barataria swamps. Otherwise, I should have mentioned it to Captain de Ruiz sooner than I did. When we were about two-thirds finished with the job, however, we were quietly asked to work night and day, to get the ship finally conditioned, and de Ruiz confided to me that, although his government had succeeded in suppressing the news up to the moment, a revolution was actually under way in Mexico.

This at once recalled to my mind the warning Lafitte had given me, and I told de Ruiz the story. Although I dealt as humorously as possible with the matter of the supposed curse on the captain's family—and, for that matter, on the captain himself—he, to my great surprize, seemed to regard it as not altogether a joke.

"Why," I remonstrated, seeing him suddenly so grave, "surely you don't take serious stock in such rubbish?"

"There is a guarded story in my family similar to the one told you on the levee," he quietly informed me. "How do you account for your grocer's knowing of it? Then, too, what of the fact, attested by your own wife and your family physician, that *your* Lafitte was in bed with a broken leg, to say nothing of a few ribs, at the same time you were talking to someone you thought was he?"

"You have me there," I confessed. "I can't figure it out any more than you can, but you may be sure of one thing: there is some perfectly logical explanation. One other thing, also—that explanation is not that I was drunk, as my wife more than half suspected!"

"*Quien sabe?*" murmured de Ruiz, with a shrug.

"'Who knows' what?" I demanded. "Whether or not I was drunk?"

"No, no!" denied the captain, with a hearty chuckle in which I joined, although not quite so heartily.

"At any rate," I added, "I am going to Vera Cruz with you, if you will take me, and your consul general will grant the necessary permission."

It happened that permission was readily granted me, and the upshot of it was that when the *Tampico* slipped down the river from New Orleans, I sailed aboard her.

ONCE we had passed the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi, we steamed away at full speed; for de Ruiz had urgent instructions to reach Vera Cruz with all possible dispatch. The first night out passed without incident, and I was beginning to enjoy the trip immensely. I do not hesitate to assert that, regardless of what may be said of their colleagues in the army, the commissioned personnel of Mexico's half-dozen gunboats is made up of men who, on the whole, are remarkably likable and intelligent. Had those on board the *Tampico* all been insufferable boors and hopeless morons, the captain's private stores contained the wherewithal, in unlimited quantity and variety, to make us all feel comfortably fraternal.

I confess (with the hope that this may never be read by my wife) to having taken some pains, on our second night out, to avoid belittling hospitality—in bottled form—by refusing it. We expected to raise Vera Cruz sometime the following day, with war and disaster in the immediate offing; so de Ruiz, his *teniente* and I sat in the captain's tiny *salón* until late, smoking and talking, with drinks at respectable intervals.

It may be that I drank too much—although I think not—or it may have been the sultry weather and the closeness of my stuffy little stateroom that caused me to dream as I did, when I finally turned in. At any rate, I dreamed: and rather remarkably.

It seemed that I saw a disorderly group of swarthy men, battering in the door of what I took to be a tomb, or burial crypt. I had the impression that they were Mexicans of the viler sort, and more or less intoxicated, judging from the manner in which they staggered about, and the inefficient way they handled the iron bars with which they finally forced the door.

I saw them drag out a moldy casket and batter it open. What they hoped to find, I could not guess; but when they shattered the coffin and exposed its contents, there appeared to be nothing but a heap of musty bones. But there was something else—one of the villains stooped and held up an object that I could not at first distinguish, but which I presently saw to be a rust-encrusted sword of antique pattern, such as one sees in

the shops of dealers in such objects on the Rue Royal, in New Orleans. With evident disgust, the fellow flung the rusty weapon back upon the ground. Then my dream faded into nothingness.

It was hardly daylight when I was awakened by insistent rapping upon the door of my stateroom. When I finally dispelled the cobwebs from my sleepy brain, sufficiently to rise and open the door, my early caller proved to be Captain de Ruiz. I stared at him for a moment, still stupid with sleep, and then it dawned upon me that my friend appeared shaken and distressed, and I hastily bade him enter.

He slumped into a sitting position upon the side of my bunk, while I waited for the explanation of his unseasonal visit. He seemed greatly to have regained his composure since I first opened the door, and hesitant to speak—ashamed, almost.

Then he told me, in exact detail, of a dream from which he had just awakened. And his dream, in every respect, was identical with my own! To be sure, this occasioned me some surprize, but the cause of his renewed agitation when I told him that we had dreamed in duplicate still did not occur to me.

"What's so exciting about it?" I wanted to know. "It's curious, certainly, but I don't see any reason to be upset."

"*La espada!*" cried de Ruiz.

"The sword?" I stupidly repeated. Then the light dawned. "You mean——?"

"The sword of Jean Lafitte," de Ruiz answered my unspoken question. "It was my great-grandfather's tomb we saw. *He* has his sword—Lafitte, I mean."

"Nonsense!" I sharply informed him—partly to cover up my own puzzlement. I was not so very sure, myself.

"I have not the matter-of-factness of you Americans, my friend. Besides, I have heard this tale of the sword of Jean Lafitte too many times from my old Indian nurse—that, and other things. I am absolutely convinced that drunken *revolucionistas*—or drunken *federalistas: quien sabe?*—unearthed the sword last night. Perhaps they thought to find treasure in the tomb. Perhaps——"

He permitted the sentence to remain unfinished; and, after a moody moment, smiled as if in self-ridicule, and lighted a cigarette. His composure seemed suite restored, and he still smiled as I good-naturedly chaffed him about his superstitions. It was still faintly in evidence as he left me, but I noticed that his face was dead-white.

MOODILY, I proceeded to dress myself, after first ringing for an orderly to bring me a small cup of black coffee, in the hope of dispelling the weight which seemed to have settled upon my spirits. The coffee heartened me somewhat, and, having no desire for further breakfast, I sought the deck to try if the early morning air would not additionally stimulate my mind to cheerful thoughts.

To my dismay, it had precisely the opposite effect. The sulking sun, hardly clear of the horizon, was a murky ball anything but provocative of cheerfulness. The air was still and sultry, and seemed even more depressing on the deck than in the close confines of my meager stateroom.

"I am glad we shall make Vera Cruz this afternoon," confided Lieutenant Morales, the *Tampico's* second in command. "I am afraid there is going to be some foul weather. I don't like the looks of things."

"I don't like it, either," I muttered; but whether I had reference to the weather, as Morales naturally understood, or to the uneasy and apparently unfounded forebodings that op-

pressed my mind, I hardly knew myself.

My own unrest, I gradually observed, seemed to be shared quite generally, although nobody else appeared conscious of the pervading air of gloom. I am afraid that most of the officers had imbibed a little too freely the night before—as, indeed, I may have also done—in a last merry fling before facing the serious duties awaiting them. Swollen heads and fuzzy palates would have accounted for their sourness, but nothing of the sort explained the sullen uneasiness with which the members of the crew went about their varied routine. The very atmosphere seemed surcharged with dismal prophecy.

Then, late in the forenoon, with our port but a few scant hours away, it happened.

Lieutenant Morales had just imparted the information that the captain had remained locked in his stateroom all morning, denying entrance to all save his orderly, who reported him to be drinking prodigiously—already hopelessly drunk, in fact. Hardly had the words been uttered, when de Ruiz gave them the lie, by himself appearing on deck. If he was drunk, I thought, he certainly carried his liquor well. There was a noticeable firmness to his step as he strode past where we stood, without appearing to notice us, and climbed the ladder to the bridge.

I noticed that his eyes were unnaturally bright, and Morales directed attention, wonderingly, to a detail even more remarkable, under the circumstances.

"Porque la espada?" he asked, of no one in particular.

I also wondered "why the sword," now that I observed it hanging at the captain's side. He was in fatigue uniform, and just barely disheveled, and the glittering, ornamented weapon looked out of harmony with the rest of his ensemble, had it not been incongruous in the first place.

The nameless, half-formed dread which had oppressed me all morning now seemed stronger than ever, and I had a sudden conviction that my intuition was about to be justified.

"Mira!" ejaculated Morales, clutching my arm.

I looked as he bade, and beheld de Ruiz upon the bridge with his gleaming sword drawn, thrusting before him at the empty air. Followed the most remarkable exhibition of swordplay it has ever been my lot to witness. The captain's blade leaped in and out like a thing alive, glittering dully ominous in the grudging rays of the murky sun. Cut and thrust, thrust and parry. While the gaping crew looked on, de Ruiz handled his sword exactly as if it crossed another, held in the hand of a deadly opponent. Yet, the bridge was empty, save for him alone!

From where I watched, spellbound, the captain's pallor was easily discernible, and I could see, also, his clenched teeth, and the desperate set of his jaw. Drunk or sober, it was a deadly serious business to him, at any rate. He seemed to be getting a shade the worst of his imaginary encounter, for he slowly retreated to the bridge ladder, and, having gained it, leaped swiftly down upon the deck, after a whirlwind of thrusting that might have been to give him the instant's respite necessary to accomplish the feat in safety.

Swiftly de Ruiz turned, and I distinctly heard his growl of cornered rage, as his sword again leaped up to ward and fend. He was strictly on the defensive, now, and gradually backed to the companion stairs. Inch by inch, step by step, he seemed forced relentlessly backward. Finally, with the same preliminary fury of thrusting that had marked his descent of the bridge ladder, the captain disappeared below.

Officers and crew surged forward to follow, but Morales awoke from the stupefaction into which he had been thrown with the rest of us, at seeing his commander fight an apparently desperate duel with thin air, and hastily posted a couple of marines at the head of the stairway to hold back the crew. Then he fairly leaped down the precarious flight of steps, I immediately behind him, and several officers close upon my heels. We rushed pellmell for the captain's *salón*, where we could hear de Ruiz moving about, swearing with low vehemence that ended, even as we ran, in a sudden, choked groan.

As the lieutenant gained the doorway of the *salón*, he stopped short; so that I almost bowled him over, so close was I behind him. I was taller than he, and could easily see over his shoulder—and what I saw caused me to gape quite as much as he probably was doing.

I have spoken of de Ruiz fighting an *imaginary* duel (and how else was I to describe it?), but I saw him now with head thrown back in agony, his pale face working horribly. With one hand, he strove to support himself against a table at his side; the other hand was clutched above his left breast. It was upon this other hand that my gaze was riveted with horror: for, as his knees buckled under his weight, and he crashed sideways upon the table, I saw that his fingers were red with the unmistakable stain of the blood that welled between them.

Upon the polished mahogany table against which de Ruiz fell was a small bottle, half filled with fiery, colorless tequila, which rocked precariously upon its bottom at the crash. Such is the complexity of the human mind that it takes remarkable cognizance of trifles associated with habit, even when focused upon other and far graver matters. Therefore, as Morales leaped to catch the captain as he slid from the table to the floor, I, quite involuntarily, rescued the half-bottle of tequila, to prevent it spilling and marring the beautiful surface of the table.

The ship's medical officer, who had been in the group at my heels, stepped in and helped Morales turn the captain on his back. His examination was very brief. He spoke to the lieutenant, and Morales sprang from his knees with his face sternly set.

"Someone," he snapped at the wide-eyed officers grouped about the doorway, "has taken advantage of circumstances to assassinate Captain de Ruiz in the interval before we followed him below. Señor Montalvo, have the kindness to immediately inform the guards at the companionway that none are to pass them until my further order, and bring me men to conduct a thorough search. In the meantime, the rest of you will patrol the corridor, and permit none to leave or enter. Go!"

Having literally spat out his orders, the lieutenant and the doctor took up the captain's body, and, between them, carried it in and laid it upon the bunk in the adjoining stateroom. With a vague feeling that I also should do something, and there being nothing better at hand, I walked over and picked up de Ruiz's sword from the floor.

As I stooped to recover it, I noticed a second sword, which had escaped attention because it had been thrown well under the table (or had rolled there. Curious, I retrieved the strange weapon, and then felt the hair prickle on the back of my neck. This sensation was not due to the significant stain upon the point, but wholly to something inherent in the sword itself. It was an ancient rapier, and very rusty; of a sort in use a hundred years and more ago.

Shakily I turned toward the door, impelled by I know not what, and saw (or, at least, I *thought* I saw) a shadowy figure in the passage, that made a mocking, significant gesture in my direction, ere it moved on in the direction of the stairway.

With the ancient sword in my hand, I leaped into the passage, bringing a sharp challenge from a guard at the far end. The corridor was absolutely empty, except for that one guard, and he, sauntering up, assured me when questioned that no one else had passed.

None the less, I felt that I had surely seen a face that I had seen before (I never could forget those eyes!), and I had had a fleeting impression of a wide, drooping hat above it, and of a shadowy form draped in a long, weathered, sleeveless cloak. These I remembered, also!

I *knew*, then, that the rotten sword in my hand was the same one I had seen in my dream—the same that poor de Ruiz had seen in *his* dream. The sword of Jean Lafitte!

I cast it through an open porthole, and put out my other hand to steady myself, for my knees felt suddenly and strangely weak. It was then I discovered that I had all along held tight to the tequila bottle. It was a small bottle, and only half full; but tequila is a terribly potent liquid. I didn't care: I was glad of it.

I drained the bottle, almost at a gulp.

A Peculiar Little Story Is This

THE SWOOPING WIND

By WILFORD ALLEN

THE gray little old man sitting so lonely on the rustic bench under the great oaks interested me. He seemed so out of place there, at first glance; yet as one drew close enough to note the details of his action there was a peculiar, indescribable something about him which one learns to recognize about such places; it is always found in certain types—a rather aimless air of gentle contentment. So I sat down beside him, for I knew he wanted to talk.

"A very pleasant day, sir," he began at once, politely.

"Yes, indeed," I responded. "Rather unusual at this time of year, is it not?"

"Not at all, sir. Not at all. I venture to say that the temperature today is about eighty-two degrees, not more than a degree from the normal at this time. And all the meteorological conditions, wind, sky, humidity, all are quite normal, abnormally normal, sir, if I may use the expression." His assertions, while quite dogmatic, were belied by the gentleness of his voice and expression as he spoke.

"You are well acquainted with the weather here, I see," I put in.

"Rather," he smiled. "I ought to

be. Pardon me for speaking without introducing myself, sir. I am William Estrich—Dr. William Estrich. Yes, I know you know me now. And you are——?"

"Charles Fritwell," I supplied.

"I am certainly pleased to know you, sir," he assured me, and I knew he spoke the truth. "It is a pleasure to meet someone with whom I can talk as to an equal. These people around here," with a shrug, "oh, they mean all right, but one really can't talk to them. I have to do all my thinking myself, and I really miss the exchange of ideas which I should have. Tomorrow I start on my greatest work—but there, I mustn't bore you with that," he finished deprecatingly.

I hastened to assure him that I should be most happy to hear him tell of his work, but for the time he had switched off. Then as suddenly he began on another tack.

"Do you know sir, there is something that I must tell you. I have never told anyone before, for—well, they always laugh at me. I know that if another told me I should laugh at him. But I know that you will not laugh. So I will tell you."

"It is surprizing how little the run of people can understand when it is outside of the little whirl of their search for the pleasure of the moment," I said. "I shall be very interested in listening to you."

"I knew you would." He was quiet a minute—several minutes. I had begun to think he had turned off on still another tangent when suddenly his whole manner changed and he turned toward me almost fiercely.

"You know me! You know me!" he repeated huskily. I nodded, for since he had introduced himself I knew him, if not before.

"Yes. You know me. Every educated person does. I am Dr. William Estrich. It is through my studies that we are able to predict the movement of storms. You were prescient, sir, in grasping as you did without my speaking of it, that I am acquainted with the weather. I should be. For I was born, put into this world, for a purpose, although I was a stupidly long time in learning that fact. And that is what I must tell you.

"I was just a child when it happened the first time. Too young to be expected to realize its meaning; for that matter who would have read the meaning in a single happening?

"I shall never forget that day; never! We lived in the country, and several of us were on our way home after school, across the fields. Crossing the fields was forbidden to me, for a bull of uncertain—perhaps I should say of certain—reputation made that field his stamping ground. But we were going along, singing or talking or playing in the way of children, and altogether forgetful of danger. I think it was I who saw it first, and it was not fifty yards away, displaying all the symptoms of anger. Suddenly terrified, I screamed and began to run, and the others likewise.

"I think I forgot to say I was the smallest of all, and I was soon outdistanced. The fence was still far ahead, and I lost still more ground by looking over my shoulder continually. It was that which almost was my undoing, for while my gaze was behind me I stepped into a gopher-hole and went down with a turned ankle.

"Providence had been with me up till then, as the bull for some reason, although obviously angry and pursuing us, was not doing so with a great deal of speed. But there I lay, unable to do anything but crawl along, screaming, and the sight seemed to stir the animal into swifter motion.

"Then the thing happened. Until that time there had not been a cloud in the sky, not a breath of air that I can recall. But at the instant that

the bull began purposely to set after me as I crawled, helpless, along the ground, there was a sudden roar, and from nowhere there was a sudden swoop of wind which enveloped the charging animal in a cloud of whirling dust. In a moment it had gone, and the bull was dashing madly across the field, away from me.

"Now sudden whirlwinds can develop. But naturally they can not develop in such force with such suddenness. They must develop, they can not spring into being in full force without being preceded by the lesser stages of development.

"Now that is that; and you can say, as I would say, that such things might happen, a fortunate coincidence that it happened as it did.

"In fact I forgot the occurrence for years. I next recalled it after the second occurrence, which was even more vivid.

"I was past thirty then, in fact I had done much of my work, and was on a trip through the high passes of the Andes, when it occurred. I was engaged, in fact, on a meteorological reconnaissance for my university.

"We had reached the summit of the pass, and seeing a level-topped peak of considerable size to the side, I was on the point of turning toward it. Ahead of us, not more than a quarter of a mile, was a party of about fifteen men, approaching us. My guides seemed a bit worried, and I was on the point of asking them what was the matter when it happened.

"The sky had been cloudless, though in this case there was a strong wind blowing through the pass at our backs. With the suddenness of a clap of thunder I again heard the roar, but where the first time it had seemed to have only terrifying force, this time it was of destructive intensity, ravening. The sky was as black as though an ash cloud had passed over the sun, and with the roar the wind swooped down. Where we were there was a strong wind. Ahead of us we could not see, then, but after the wind had subsided as suddenly and inexplicably as it had descended, and we went ahead to investigate, we could see the effects of its force. Now, I know, I have calculated the strength of the tornadic winds which in the great plains can drive a splinter of wood through a tree trunk. It is in the neighborhood of four hundred miles an hour. But I tell you that wind, where it struck in force at the spot which had been occupied by the approaching party, did things which no air moving less than thousands of miles an hour could do. Did it, and was gone. And there was no trace left of that party.

"Still, the precise similarity did not show up at once. My guides were terrified, and ran; and I, fearing to be left there alone, went after them with a gun. I was in fact surprized when they returned so meekly at my command, and still more surprized at what they told me.

"The approaching band were robbers; more, they were murderers, and my guides had notified them, in the way they have, beyond understanding, of sending messages ahead in those mountains, that I was coming. In short, it was to be an ambush, and if they had come up to me I should have been dead within a few moments. The swoop of the tremendous wind had seemed to my men like the direct intervention of heaven on my behalf; in fact it was that belief which brought their confession.

"Now you will see the similarity between that occurrence and the first. In each case my life was saved when in the natural order of events it should have been lost."

He stopped speaking, and I thought he had finished, and started some remark about it, but he interrupted me; and whereas his speech before had been controlled, he now surprized me with a vehemence I did not look for in the quiet-natured little man.

"You see now?" He leaned forward and his face worked convulsively. "You see? Each time to save me! Each time it was the wind which saved me! And my life-work was the study of the wind. There could be but one conclusion. I am to make great discoveries in meteorological science, and the elements themselves will protect my life until I have accomplished my work. It must be a great work, to interest nature herself to set aside her laws in my favor. No other man has had that done for him!"

"That is a most fascinating thought," I put in, but he waved me into quietude as he continued.

"But the last time! God!—there, you will forgive me if I seem to blaspheme—if I had my way I'd damn it all for the mockery it is. But I can't! I can't! My God! I'm helpless, just an instrument denied its own life, its own happiness!

"Soon after that second time of which I spoke, I met a girl. You can guess what happened. Temporarily—I told myself it would be only temporarily—my scientific interests were forced into second place, a second place so far out of mind as to be almost nonexistent. For I had already achieved a position in the world. I had already done work which many could not equal in a lifetime, and if I had found the new interest of a real love which should drive that other interest from my heart, well, I could afford to, very well.

"So we were married, and on our wedding trip went down along the coast of South America, down the west side, intending to return up the other side. But we never reached it.

"My God, Fritwell!" the tears stood in his eyes as he turned to me, although his voice did not reach; "Fritwell, I can never forget that night. And that is the reason that in all the years since then I have never been able to concentrate on the work I must do before I am allowed to die. But tomorrow I think I will manage to start again.

"But that night! It was a perfect evening of the Chilean summer, and the soft chords of thrumming Spanish melodies floated over the ship as we sat about or paraded the decks. Inside of the dancing salon there was the gleam of eager faces, alight with color and animation as the dancers swung to the orchestra's strains. We had danced, and were outside, looking over the water, with the stars shining down on us from above and reflected back at us by the smooth black water. We talked low, listening at the same time to each other's voices and to the waltz—it was *Sobre las Olas*, the prettiest piece in the world when a Spanish orchestra plays it over Spanish waters on a summer evening. If there was trouble in the world, we had forgotten it. There was nothing on the boat save joyousness and youth and love.

"We were planning. They always plan on their honeymoon, if it is the real thing. And we were planning softly together, and I was drinking in the musical sound of her voice, more wrapt up in it than in the meaning of her words, when it struck!

"It struck, damn it! It struck! And she knew what it meant to do. For, as all the world seemed to be whirling in the one tremendous swoop of the wind, literally tearing the ship and the sea to pieces and mixing them until only God himself could tell which was sea and which was ship, I tried to clutch her to me. But she struggled to break away, and through

the roar of all the gales that ever blew, concentrated at that one point in that moment, somehow, I can't say how, I heard her words: 'Let me go, Will! Let me go! Can't you see?—don't you know?—you can't have me and your work both. It has come for me. Let me go, oh, let me go!'

"My God! She was right! Right out of my arms it snatched her, and then all was still again. But where there had been a hundred hearts throbbing to life and love, there was now only one, and it was throbbing to hate! It still does. I hate it! I hate it! What do I want of life now? But I can't die. I am its slave."

LATER I spoke of him in the office. "Oh, Estrich? Yes, he is a nice fellow. What he told you is partly true. At least, he was a scientist, and the only survivor of a boat which was lost in a sudden storm with his bride of a few weeks. The rest of it was—well, you could see for yourself he was quite crazy, though harmless."

I did not tell my informant, nor had I told Estrich, of my experience in the Andes the previous year.

We had come to a point in the pass where a cloudburst seemed to have scooped the rock bare of earth, and I noted that my friends crossed themselves. I remarked on it.

"Yes, *Señor,*" was the response, "But this is the Place of the Wrath of Heaven!"

"It must of necessity be, then, that there is a legend about this place," I said, expecting to draw out another of the place-tales one meets with.

My friend who was answering laughed nervously. "But for the once I must decline to tell the legend. For you see I believe it, and to your ears should I tell it, it would be unbelievable. You would laugh."

"Do I not know that the tongue of Don Pico speaks nothing but truth?" I answered.

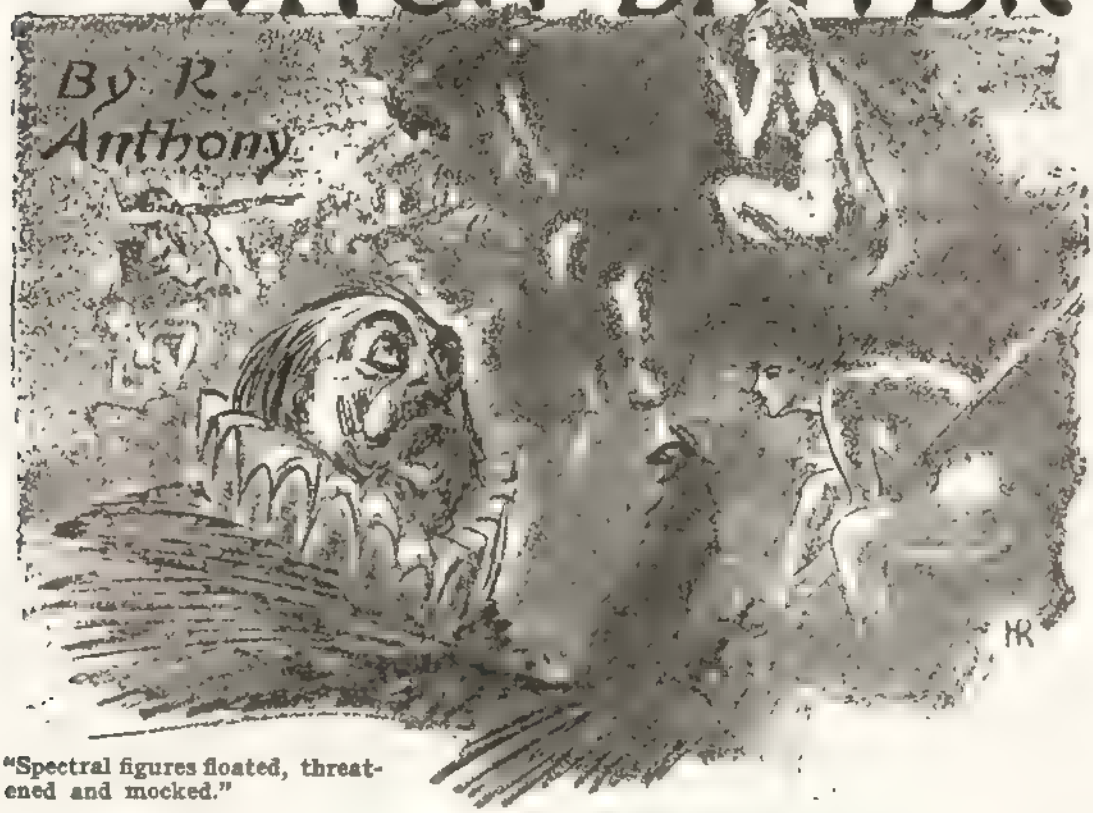
"That is truth. Well, I take the chance. You saw that the ground was swept bare, completely, and perhaps you think a most terrible storm of rain caused it. You would be wrong. It was the wind, *Señor*. And with the dirt it took away twelve men—puff!—and no one ever found a coat from their backs.

"It was fifteen years ago, *Señor*. A scientist, an American, was going over the pass as are we. And his rascally guides thought to arrange an ambush with some robbers, to share the loot.

"But for once, *Señor*, heaven in these degenerate days saw fit to perform a miracle like those of the Good Book. When the meeting was almost at hand—Hand of God! It was dark, though there had been no cloud. And a wind such as never the Andes had seen came and struck the robbers and destroyed even the ground they stood on. And—Hand of God! In the next moment it was clear and quiet, but the robbers were vanished completely. And the guides were changed men, *Señor*. They confessed and were punished; and now they work in the garden of the church at Lima, doing the work of God."

The WITCH-BAITER

By R. Anthony



"Spectral figures floated, threatened and mocked."

MYNHEER VAN RAGEVOORT did not like the dark! There were things he could not see in the dark, but which he knew were there. But there were also things that he knew did not exist, which the darkness nevertheless conjured before his eyes. Faces! Spectral figures that floated and threatened and mocked! Many faces, many figures! And those of women chiefly, and girls! Of course, they had been witches and he had condemned them to the torture, to the stake, to the rope. But why should they trouble him, dance about him, beckon him? He had not executed them; he had merely been their judge, the administrator of the Law! The Law forced him and he was helpless! Still they bothered. Sometimes they seemed so real! . . .

Emphatically, Mynheer van Ragevoort, the Justice of Hegemonde, did not like the dark! Worse, noises often came from the night, noises that were mysterious and unaccountable. Sounds like the voices of people, especially sounds of women in pain, shrieking in torture, gasping brokenly!

There! The Justice started. He seemed to recognize a voice—yes, he heard it distinctly! It sounded like—ah, now he remembered!—the voice of Melisande zer Honde, a slight girl, pale and pretty, a child of scarcely twelve. How she had screamed when the rack drew out her joints and stretched her muscles and ripped the ligaments! Yet she had confessed! He had been amazed that so young a child should be a witch! But witnesses had stated so,

and under the torture she had admitted it. So he was forced to sentence her—to burning at the stake! How she had pleaded for life! How she had shrieked when the flames enveloped her! And then that appalling stillness, broken only by the crackling of fagots and the rush of the flames!

And there was the sweet, innocent face of Gertrudis Bourdelaide. No, he doubted her accusers. He had known the girl since her birth, in fact, he had lifted the child over the baptismal font as her godfather! Terribly she had been accused—*and had confessed!* They had to carry her away from the torture. He remembered how her crushed legs had quivered in agony, the white, bloodless features, the maimed hands. She had endured much, but she had confessed! The rope and quartering! But those moans, long-drawn, haunting, unending! Never a shriek, never a cry, only moans! Would he ever forget?

The Justice shook himself. He flung his cloak around his head and moved down the road, carrying in his hand a small lantern, from which a candle shone weakly. "Not much good in this thick gloom," he muttered. There was a fog in the air, which scarcely stirred with his movements. Yet the stillness, the lack of motion made him feel unsafe, restless. What was behind the gloom?

Hurriedly he trod the road toward his castle, his home. This stood somewhat apart from the city, as became the overlord and Justice. Not for him to live among gossips and small tradesmen! Besides, it was the home of his fathers.

A faint rustling sound made him pause. He peered around intently, but perceived nothing. Even his candle seemed unable to pierce the fog beyond his arm's reach. Silence around him! Well, he must move on, toward home, toward rest—perhaps. At least he would see his daughter . . .

Something huge and light fluttered from the fog and fell over his head, covering him with soft folds. In fright he dropped his lantern and gurgled a shriek. He fought back the folds, but they enveloped him tighter and tighter, drawing around him till his arms were helpless.

And then hands seized him, on the right and the left, and a voice whispered: "Come! But say naught!"

"What—what——" he began. But an insistent prod of some pointed weapon made him move forward.

FORWARD! But where? Where were they taking him? And for what purpose? The cloth covering his eyes made little difference; he had been unable to see anything without it. They left the road, moved across ditches, over the veldt. Stops when he was lifted over some obstacle—a hedge or boundary mark, he thought. More veldt! And around him the faint thuds of numerous feet, slithering noises of mantles brushing against each other, muffled clinks of metal. God! what was in store for him?

The Justice stumbled through a ditch. Then hard and rounded bumps under his feet—ah, he was back in Hegemonde, in the city—among people! If he called——!

A sharp point pressed his side and a warning hiss apprized him of what would happen. So he was silent.

Some steps up which he stumbled, then a chamber. He felt himself led to a seat. How familiar that seat felt! With his feet he cautiously felt about himself. Yes, there were the legs of the table, and there his own footstool. It was his own: he was in the Court of Justice, his own court!

"Your own court! Your own dais!" came in deadened tones beside him. "We are here to try the witch of witches, to try her under the Law! But she must not know us lest sorrow

come to all of us. So speak not above a whisper!"

Routine! But why in the night? And who was the woman they called the witch of witches?

"Begin!" the dull command was given.

Routine! Well, he would go through with it! "In the name of the Lord on High," he intoned in a penetrating whisper, "and in the name of His Majesty, the King of Spain and the Netherlands! There stands before us a—a——"

"A maiden!" prompted the voice.

"——a maiden, accused of having sold her immortal soul to the foul fiend in unholy conspiracy and of having exercised her black power in wanton sorcery and witchcraft to the detriment of man, woman and child, upon their property, their goods and possessions and upon their produce." A pause, then: "Woman, do you confess?"

Silence.

"Who witnesseth against her?" he continued.

"We all do witness against her," whispered someone in front of him.

"Aye! Aye! It is true!" whispered many voices.

"We vow she hath bewitched us or those of our families and contributed to our loss, even the death of our loved ones," said the accuser.

"Aye, she hath! We so vow it!" chorused the others.

"Doth the witch confess?" asked Mynheer the Justice.

Silence.

"Then to the rack with her—till she confesses!"

A scream of terror, quickly muffled, a sardonic cackle whose uvular tone seemed familiar, then the shuffle of many feet.

The Justice remained seated. No need for him to enter the torture chamber. Besides, he would not be able to see. In fact, he did not care to see. He had seen too many, too many! And they always confessed!

Through the open door he heard the spinning of rolls, the weak clatter of winding drums. A hush replete with indefinite sounds—they were fastening loops around the ankles and wrists of the witch. Then the squeak of turning handles, a pause, another squeak, a moan, a stifled shriek! A wait, then the plash of water! Another squeak of the drums . . .

In accustomed routine the Justice leaned to one side of the great chair. Another twist of the rack, then would come the familiar sounds, and then—confession! He listened inattentively. For there was a bigger, a personal question. What were they intending to do to him? And why this secret trial? If they would only talk in loud voices, and not in those awful whispers! It was unreal—unreal!

Again the splash of water, then another squeak, followed by faint clicks and tears, joints giving way and flesh ripping! A ghastly shriek! "God! I confess," in a pain-shocked voice. "A-a-h-h!" and silence.

Yes, that was the usual result, sometimes a little slower in coming, but not often. There! That quiet cackle! He knew it! No wonder—the skilled hands of the executioner were in charge!

The shuffle of feet once more and then a voice. "Your Worthiness, she hath confessed her guilt! Your sentence?"

Mynheer van Ragevoort roused himself. Sentence! Very well! "To be hanged by the neck until death do claim her! At once!" This would be sufficient, and few preparations necessary! A rope and——

He must be short, he wanted to be away! Let them hurry and free him!

For a long time he sat there and waited—waited silently, for around him all noise had ceased. There had been a little shuffling of men entering

the prison enclosure—to see the witch hung, of course—but nothing more. So he sat and pondered. He felt stifled. The cloth over his head impeded his breath and drowsiness overcame him.

The tramp of feet aroused him. A moment later the fetters were removed from his arms and the cloth lifted from his head and shoulders.

He blinked in the sudden light of torches. Before him he saw a number of hooded figures, all with voluminous cloaks, faces hidden behind black veils. Were these the same men? he wondered.

"So it is here we find you, Sir Justice!" said the leader.

Mynheer did not recognize the voice.

"We looked for you in the castle. You were not there!"

Hm! So they looked for him. What did it mean? Why should they look for him when they had him already? And why no longer the whispers? At least he was thankful for that!

"Arise, sir, and take your place. You are to be tried!" said the leader.

Nine men in all, noted Mynheer. Two of them pushed him from the chair and led him down to a bench before the dais.

The tall leader at once occupied the chair of justice.

"Sir Justice, note what I say! You have been tried in secret trial and found guilty! We came tonight to execute sentence! We went to your home and waited for you! You did not come! Later we searched and found you absent! So at length we thought to look here! And here you are!" with sudden humor.

Mynheer van Ragevoort said nothing, only gazed bewildered at the mummer.

"Sir Justice, we are the *Vehmgericht!* In secret we met and considered you and the justice meted out by you. Sir, you have been an unjust judge. You have been a plague to this land! Like a wild beast you have persecuted the innocent and condemned them to death. Nothing has held you back—not friendship, not pity, not justice, not even the ties of blood! You lusted only to kill!"

He paused and seemed to wait for an objection. Mynheer found the words. "They were witches all! They confessed! The Law gave me——"

"The Law!" scorned the leader in stinging tones. "Your wild superstition was the Law. Not the written Law! With you an accusation was the equal of proof! You never gave fair trial!"

"They confessed!" the Justice muttered.

The leader stood up and pointed an accusing finger at him. "They confessed—under insane torture. They confessed—to escape further torture! They confessed—what you wished them to confess! Confession, indeed! So would you confess! Can an innocent child of ten—for such was Gertrudis Bourdelaide—know anything of wickedness, of sorcery, of witchcraft? Yet you forced her by the vilest tortures to say she was guilty. Did Melisande zer Honde know of witchcraft? She confessed to it—after you tore her on the rack. Did Roberta Deswaarters ever perpetrate any wickedness—she, a patient little saint, who spent most of her young life in pain? Yet you forced her to admit unholy practises—by means of the rack, the stocks! Did Margaréte Van Voelker, or Pieta der Groote—oh, why name them all, the dozens of decent folk you put to death! For years you have sown terror in the land, you have revolted minds with your unheard-of cruelties. You were the scourge of the people until they wearied of it!

"Men came together and in secret protest asked the *Vehmgericht* for

justice. When the Law is in unjust hands, man may—and must—take the Law from those hands and punish them! That is what the *Vehmgericht* has decided. Sir Justice, stand and hear your sentence!"

Mynheer van Ragevoort arose stiffly. It was all like a dream and still terribly real. For some reason he could not muster his thoughts to utter a protest. Pictures of trials, of tortured women, of executions, raced through his mind. It was true, terribly true, what the leader had said. But he had not meant to be unjust. He, too, had suffered, because of his duty. He had wanted to rid the land of the plague of witches, he had wished to make his land free of sorcery and witchery for all time to come. Many times he had wavered when friends, and even relatives, proved guilty; but resolutely, without fear or favor, he had administered the Law.

The leader was speaking. "You were sentenced to torture and death!" he said in somber tones. "Such was the sentence decided on!"

A pause—Mynheer twisted his hands, his face suddenly pale and beaded with cold drops.

Again the leader spoke, solemnly, impressively, and the eyes that gleamed blackly through the veil held something of pity. "Torture and death! Such was the sentence. But —this sentence will not be carried out —not completely! You shall not die through our hands!—For there is worse than death that has struck you! Perhaps it is the Hand of God! We assembled tonight to carry out the sentence on you. But we found that others had been at work! We found that they had seized you—grief-stricken fathers they were, men fully as crazed with fear of witches as you —they had captured the witch of witches, as they thought—had tried her before your court, tortured her and hung her. Their vengeance is gruesome!"

What did it all mean? Mynheer van Ragevoort seemed paralyzed. His eyes were wide, his mouth open, all his features expressed complete lack of understanding.

"You know not," continued the leader, "who the witch of witches was? Nor will I tell you. They blinded you, Sir Justice, and blind was your judgment. But a taste of the torture shall be yours, and then you will be freed. Perhaps—perhaps you will be more forbearing hereafter. To work, men!"

STRONG hands seized Mynheer van Ragevoort and quickly stripped him of his clothes. In a trice, so it seemed, they bore him to the torture chamber and looped the ropes around his wrists and ankles.

A spin of the drums, the ropes tautened and squeaked, pain unbearable shot through his limbs and scorched his joints.

"Another turn!" commanded the leader.

Agonized sweat rolled over the Justice's body, his mouth sagged and a croak came from his throat. "I—I —confess!" he moaned.

"Confess!" exclaimed the leader in chill tones. "Confess—what?"

The taut body could not even writhe—could only quiver. "I—I—know not!" Mynheer gasped.

"Nor we!" the leader made a gesture, the drums swung back a half-turn and tightened with a jerk.

Suffering indescribable tore into him—the Justice fainted. Water splashed over his head awoke him. God! Now he knew that crazing agony! He had sometimes wondered why the accused gave in so readily, after a few whirls of the drums! He had been inclined to despise them as weaklings. Guilt alone could not endure, innocence certainly must! But

now he knew! Oh, to escape this torment! Anything, anything — even death! But to escape!

A searing pain at his sides, yet he knew not whether it was hot or cold metal that touched him! And then the ropes became slack. What they did with him he scarcely knew—his whole body ached with tearing pains! And his head! It pounded and pounded and pounded.

A raw pang on his forefinger seemed to swell and swell until his arm—no, his body—grew large with the torment. What were they doing? He saw it—a pincer was plucking at a fingernail, slowly pulling it from its foundation. God! What could he do to get away from such torture? Waves of pain welled forth from the finger, greater than his body could endure!

Something else! They had bound his wrists behind him; his ankles also were bound and heavy weights attached. Why this? Why didn't they simply kill him and be done with it?

A hook slipped under his fettered wrists, there was a pull, and suddenly he soared, his weighted body suspended by the wrists. And then he dropped. Again they drew him aloft and dropped him. Shoulders twisted and cracked and ached, his body seemed an immense pain. He fainted.

A rocking motion aroused him. He was dressed and covered with a cloth; they were carrying him! He felt strangely numb, conscious of ever-present but subdued pain. And so weary, so weak, so exhausted!

At last the motion changed. They had entered some dwelling and now they laid him down. Steps moved away, and then someone spoke—the leader!

"The sentence has been executed, Sir Justice! May it teach you to be more merciful hereafter! We leave you now—with your victim!"

Half-conscious, he wondered. "My victim?" he asked, his voice muffled by the enveloping cloth.

"Look and see!" in a chilling whisper. There were quick steps, the slam of a door, and then silence.

Mynheer van Ragevoort scrambled painfully to his feet, weakened hands tore at the enshrouding folds. There! —he saw light—the cloth fell away. But he knew that room—those paintings—that table, the chairs—why, he was in his own home! So they had carried him to his house, his castle!

He was thankful for even that. But why this strange, oppressive silence in the house? Where were the servants? And his——

His roving eyes caught sight of something. Over there, on the great divan, lay something very limp and still, covered with a white drape. That—that—his victim, the leader had said! But in this house—was it —everything was so silent—was it his——? No, no, it must not be!

He crept weakly to the divan and tore the sheet from the still figure. "God! Anne-Marie! My daughter!"

He stared at her, unbelieving, uncomprehending. His victim? Oh, no! Not that, not that! But it was his daughter that lay there, lifeless, features frozen in an eternal mask.

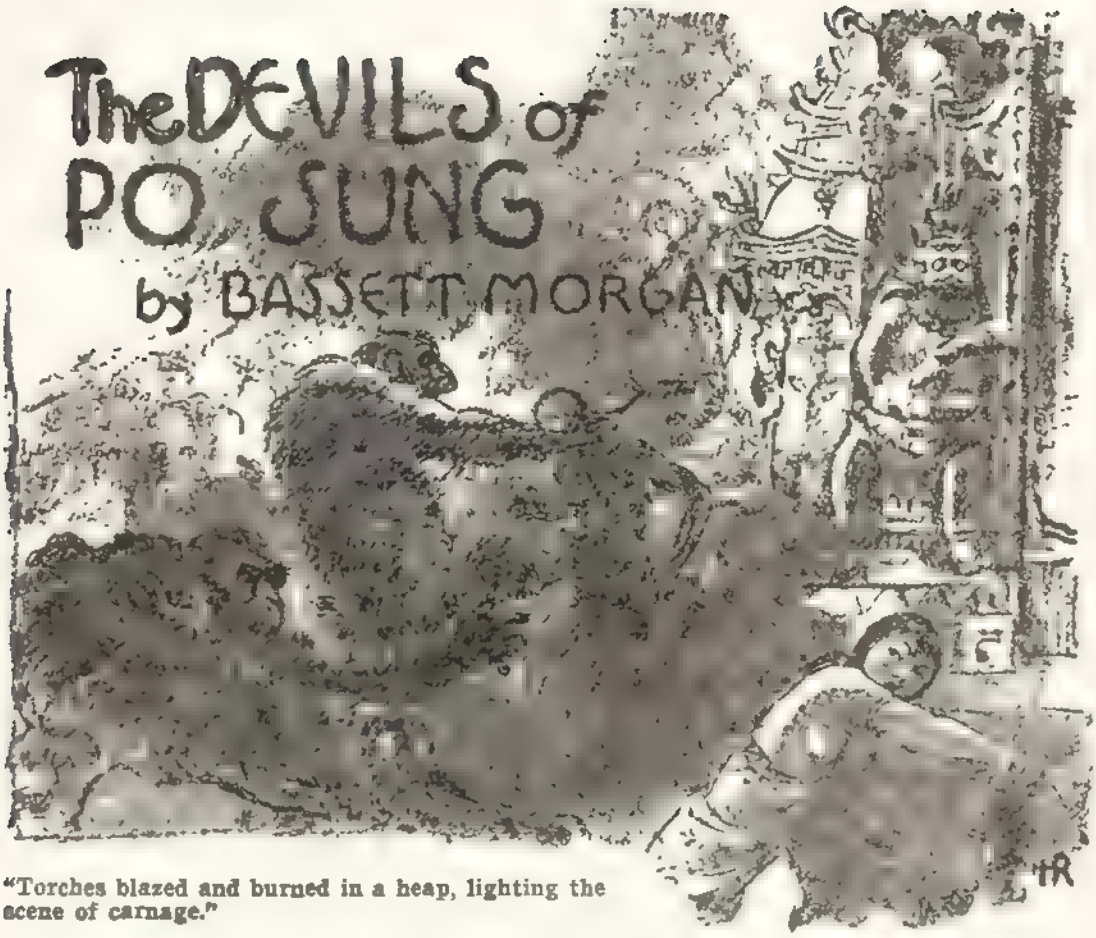
Slowly he inspected her. Quivering fingers felt the soft flesh, not yet rigored in death. He saw raw welts around her wrists and bare ankles. Around her neck an irregular stripe —they had hanged her!

His victim! It was she—Anne-Marie, his daughter!—that had been tried as the witch of witches that night! They had tortured her and—and he—he had ordered the torture! *"And she confessed!"* he groaned. "I—I ordered—her execution—*as a witch!* God!"

The room reeled and he crashed to the floor.

The DEVILS of PO SUNG

by BASSETT MORGAN



"Torches blazed and burned in a heap, lighting the scene of carnage."

OF ALL wealth abounding in Papua for the man who risks its myriad perils and keeps faith with the under-dogs of trade channels by which pearls and Paradise skins flow forth, Captain McTeague preferred pearls. He was a connoisseur and could state at sight and with remarkable accuracy the natal place of a nest of pearls. On the somewhat sketchy charts of tortuous outlines of the evilly lovely black sphinx of the South Seas he had painstakingly marked the location of more prolific sources of those translucent drops of tinted glory, and the finest came from a lagoon on the north coast guarded by an unspoiled, therefore indomitable tribe under the rule of Tukmoo.

In ports which splash the transient whitewash of civilization on the Papuan sea rims, it was said that Tukmoo's warriors had never met defeat; that as sorcerer, Tukmoo devised ingenious tortures that were the envy of his rivals; that he it was who punished infidelity of women by having them devour facial features of their lovers uncooked and sliced from the living victim, who was staked to the ground, and both were sentenced to the dreadful palm death which takes days of frightful agony, within sight and sound of each other.

Captain McTeague did not doubt the tales told of Tukmoo until he enquired for pearls from old Quong Yick, the Chinese who got them in exchange for alarm clocks, beads,

printed silks and tin dippers, and the old trader cast the first shadow of suspicion on the hitherto gleaming hellishness of Tukmoo's intrepidity.

"Tukmoo no got. Long time he no got. He ver' sick in his liver for why he no got. He say heap debbil-debbil have got lagoon. He make plenty magic but no can do drive out debbil. Me no savvy. Maybe go look-see."

When he went north to Sarong for gum-dammar, it would not be much out of his course for Captain McTeague to investigate for himself the reason of the dearth of Tukmoo's fine pearls. McTeague headed his schooner toward that red mark on his chart which designated the best pearl lagoon known from the Curlews to the Solomons.

Starting with a sulfur-yellow sky and dead calm from which the wind moaned as it arose and lashed the Banda Sea to fury, a storm drove him from his course and delayed his arrival. With the gray seas still pursuing in hump-backed fury, McTeague saw another craft storm-harried as his own but making remarkable speed in the tail of a typhoon which had kept him on deck for forty-eight hours. She was slender and rakish, black as the hells she came from, with lurid storm-red flashes of light on her pugnacious brass guns. She seemed to be headed for some harbor until McTeague hove in sight, then she veered about as if on patrol. When he drove in closer there was a burst of white smoke, a low "boom" and the scream of a shot ricochetting too close for risking a second aim of her gunner. Captain McTeague promptly turned tail, cursing his own carelessness in not learning more about the debbil-debbils which put fear into the heart of the dauntless and devilish Tukmoo. That grim streak of a craft fast swallowed by coast shadow was manned by oily Mascats, head-hunting Dyaks and God alone knew what mixture of human wolves; but any and all of them merely spineless innocents compared with their master, who had made his own name the terror of the Banda.

McTeague knew as much as any other man about Po Sung. He was a Mongolian tainted by the worst of other strains of heritage. He spoke excellent English, was suave in company of Europeans and had so huge a grasp of trade that he was a valued confidant of port merchants and diplomats for some years while he perfected his own sovereignty in hidden realms of wealth. Po Sung was like a giant octopus with tentacles reaching to every compass point. Now that he was growing old he had brazenly disdained the guise of decency and took his true colors, secure from vengeance in some backwater shelter where he devised and executed his schemes unmolested. Captain McTeague wished he had not run across Po Sung.

He would have headed out and away only the storm had strained his schooner and snapped off a few spars and he needed to seek shelter and make repairs, especially as the barometer which rose promisingly had suffered a relapse, presaging a flash-back of storm.

At sunset, luridly furious behind the crouching black spine of Papuan hills, he headed the schooner into a lagoon and dropped anchor and was not surprized to be wakened shortly after he turned in by drums of the jungle talking in purring spurts and long tattoo rolls. His arrival was being broadcast by black men in the same manner in which their forebears had communicated news of the epochal upheavals of world inundation, the sunken Lemuria and Atlantis. The night was pregnant with menacing growl of drums, and a grimmer dawn poured opalescent

light over a lagoon alert with darting canoes, slender as arrows, heralding the arrival of the sorcerer Tukmoo.

As the sorcerer's canoe shot alongside the schooner, McTeague saw that Tukmoo wore a necklace of pearls large as his finger ends, strung between human incisor teeth. He was plumed and painted, covered from forehead to heel with blue lace of tattooing beaded with cicatrices. A scarlet loin-cloth supported a club knobbed with human knuckle-bones. The forty paddles stabbed the water as one, and McTeague was wondering (since there are but two in a set) how many incisor teeth went into that necklace, when Tukmoo reached the deck, and planting his prehensile-toed feet firmly demanded in fairly fluent pidgin-English, strong drink.

McTeague obliged with watered brandy further weakened by grenadine sirup with a chaser of coffee. He had blundered into a lagoon usurped by Tukmoo when he was driven from his heritage by Po Sung. He regretted the cruise and again wished himself far away.

"O Chief, I must make repairs to my boat," he stated. "How come you no longer guard the pearl lagoon to the south?"

Tukmoo spoke wily words of wisdom. He had the advantage of acquaintance during youth and young manhood with a zealous missionary and at the good man's death from old age had absorbed (according to his belief) wisdom of his heart, which Tukmoo ate roasted. He related a cause for deserting his pearl lagoon which was difficult to translate into pidgin. Captain McTeague shortened the tale for his Swede mate, Okey, when he announced that he would go ashore with Tukmoo.

"Okey, Po Sung has got the pearl lagoon. He's loosed a few extra fine devils and scared the giblets out of Tukmoo. I don't understand the details, but Po Sung has a flock of red devils on the river. They sound like man-eaters, whether bird or beast I can't make out. The muggers speak words. The apes chin-chin in native lingo. The land is bewitched. I suspected a phonograph, but Tukmoo has one he got from Quong Yick and knows better. His son sailed in to lick hell out of Po Sung and turned up missing just when he was ready to marry a girl all nicely ripened in the bleaching-huts. Tukmoo is ready to make bigger magic by torturing this girl, only we happened along in time to fall into the mess, and I wish to God that typhoon had piled us on the Curlews before we ran in here. Tukmoo demands that I go and make magic that will drive out Po Sung, since his own monkey-tricks have failed. There's no choice about it, Okey. I've got to go or they'll make potpourri and Irish stew of you and me and the crew. Get me my box of parlor tricks and Bengal lights and pack in a dozen sticks of dynamite with fuses and caps. If you hear me fire two shots twice in succession be ready to grab me and run for deep water. If I don't come back the schooner is yours, Okey."

"You ban damn fool to go," commented Okey. But already Captain McTeague felt the thrill of high adventure beating his blood to foam as the drums in canoes spoke to drums on shore of events going forward.

The stilt-legged huts of a comparatively new village were fresh-thatched and clean. Women stirred cooking-pots over beach fires. Beside Captain McTeague swaggered a black boy, Tao, carrying the box of parlor magic over which he was appointed guard. It was the first time Captain McTeague had been in league with black men or broken his wisdom

of neutrality in thirty years of trading. He assumed an arrogance he did not feel as he sat at the feast of roast sea-turtle, scraped coconut cream and stewed fish washed down with fermented palm-juice. Strolling about the village afterward he saw the bereaved mother of Tukmoo's lost son Tawa, her body painted in white stripes, her hair matted with filth in token of mourning grief. He also saw old women guarding the bleaching-hut, and caught a glimpse of the bride, who stuck out her head and gazed for a long minute at this white man who came to fight Po Sung's debbil-debbils and avenge her lost lover. She was pretty as a doll, with hair like a curly feather duster, and skin bleached to creamy copper. To McTeague she called a greeting, "Halloo, *Tuan!*"

Tukmoo's rage was sudden. He yelped a command and the girl's shrieks shrilled through the village with the sound of a whip.

"Are you having that child beaten?" he demanded of Tukmoo.

"Not enough to injure her comeliness, because if she is not killed for a debbil feast, I will sell her to a big-bellied Chinese trader," explained Tukmoo.

McTeague knew the folly of interference, yet he hated the sound of the whipping, and played a bold game for a man in the power of savages whose aspect could change from friendliness to yelps of blood-lust in the twinkling of an eye.

"You are wrong to punish the woman just now," he said. "She will prove a help to our magic if she is told she will be taken with us so that her liver, hot with love for your son Tawa, will smell out the place where he is kept prisoner."

Tukmoo was impressed by this reasoning and yelped a rescinding command. The shrieks of the girl changed to quiet sobbing. The whip-wielder leaped from the hut and the girl was flung, sobbing hysterically, to the doorway, where she looked down on McTeague with tear-streaked face and eyes like brimming golden pools. He wondered if her evident adoration of him as her deliverer might be turned to account in getting himself out of a perilous predicament.

TUKMOO commanded a day of feasting. By night the *lagi-lagi* house held sodden harvest of drunken and overstuffed warriors, and Tukmoo slept with his head on the stomach of his oldest wife. McTeague, who dined and drank sparingly, prowled through the deserted village and halted beside the bleaching-hut, where a rift of moonlight splintered by palm sabers twinkled on the face of the girl at the door. Near by drowsed the young Tao with McTeague's box between his legs.

In a long day of scheming and planning escape by the river McTeague saw his first chance of success. Laying a finger on his lips for silence, he beckoned the girl down the notched log from the hut and touched the sleepy Tao, who started, snatched up the box and stood ready to accompany the white sorcerer.

McTeague pointed to the river and a canoe hauled on shore. It was slipped soundlessly to the water and the three took their places with the girl in the prow. McTeague understood the awe of his magic box which made them obey unquestioningly. Tukmoo ruled by fear of his cruelties, and the white sorcerer was greater than Tukmoo. In the face of that appraisal of his powers, McTeague did not dare command Tao to head for the lagoon and schooner. He was compelled to make some sort of farce of laying Po Sung's devils, for a cry from Tao would arouse the village and turn the moon-silvered peace to red slaughter. He saw regretfully that Tao headed the canoe inland on the black waterway.

They had not gone a half-mile when in the din of droning, humming, clacking insects came a sound which made the girl gasp with fear and held Tao's paddle dripping as he paused to listen. It was like a voice speaking through a muffled, rasping megaphone. McTeague's skin was prickling as he distinguished words, disconnected and maudlin, as if a drunken sailor mouthed a booming sea-chantey.

"Blo-ow . . . ma-an do-o-own, o-oh blo-ow tha ma-an do-own." It was repeated and followed by obscene curses.

"Walk-about land, *Tuan!*" whispered the girl who crouched at McTeague's feet.

"A white man in the jungle," he stated with conviction.

"Debbil-debbil!" came a low mutter from Tao.

McTeague watched the river for a canoe. Moon-silver, frail as a spider's spinning, crinkled on the black flow which upheaved. The long head of a crocodile lifted and it seemed to McTeague that from its wicked jaws came a water-smothered repetition of "Blo-ow the man do-own." Then it sank and bubbles broke. The canoe shot forward under frenzied paddling, and in its wake the mugger again lifted his snout and gaping jaws.

"Da-amn Po Su-ung," came a hollow growl answered by a cackle of raucous laughter from the jungle which made McTeague snatch the revolver at his hip.

"Orang-outang," he said as a tree branch released from the clutch of the mighty "gray man of the woods" crashed. Again came that outcry of terrible mirth and he saw the gray shape, a lighter shadow in the gloom where the moonlight quivered through shaken palms.

"The joke is on you, Red Moorphy," came a deep-chested growl. "Ye hated wather. It took Po Sung to make ye loike ut. Why don't ye find pearls yerself? Pearls! Hell, they got us in this mess. Made a mugger o' you an' a monkey o' me."

Red Murphy! McTeague knew that name. It belonged to a drunken loafer and thief who had served time for killing a Chink trader in pearls. But he could not credit his senses as he heard a jungle voice attribute the personality of a river mugger to Red Murphy.

The canoe leaped like an arrow down the stream, but the gray man of the woods kept pace and the crocodile followed. A patch of shelving shore denuded of vegetation gave off a sickening stench. McTeague was thankful the walk-about ground was temporarily deserted of saurians. At his feet the girl quivered and her teeth chattered. His hair rose in contagion of fear as the moonlight entered a less dense patch of jungle vines where the big ape swung by one foot peering at the river. Again arose that soul-shattering human laughter ringing through the night.

"Wan more white fool," came the guttural cry. "Go on, you bloody idiot! Po Sung'll take yer brain an' sell yer dried head, an' feed yer carcass to his orchids. Like he did to Red Moorphy an' me. God . . . God . . . like he did to us fer wantin' a few pearls . . ."

A scream from the girl contracted McTeague's nerve skeins. From behind the leathery throat of the saurian moaned a booming "Meat—whi-ite me-eat. Ee-at. Dr-rink an' be-ee merry."

"Lave 'em alo-one," growled the ape. "I'll have company when Po Sung gits 'em. Don't fill yer leather belly wid white ma-an. Here, have a nut." There was a thud as the hairy gray arm swung and a coconut hit the mugger's jaws, which snapped shut. Then it lunged on shore, the crooked-fanged jaws snapping in vain at the ape which swung just out of

reach and shrilled curses as it pelted the armor-clad mugger with coconuts.

McTeague stared. He pinched his own flesh to make sure he was awake. Glancing at Tao he saw sweat pouring down the oiled black chest of the native and the gleam of his eye-whites as he strained every muscle to outdistance the river horror.

Through the overhung river channel resounded the crash of water beaten by the powerful tail of the crocodile, its booming curses of port dive origin, the thuds of coconuts on its scaly length, the horrid shrieks of the ape's mirth as it denuded palms of their nuts. The river bobbed with them. The roar and scream of the combat was like thunder, silencing the rasp of insect clatter and hard breathing of Tao. McTeague thought he should soon awake from this incredible nightmare. He assured himself it was the ravings of delirium, but the finger-nails of the girl cut his flesh as she clutched his legs in her terror.

"Catchum white-man chin-chin," she quivered. "Make magic, Tuan."

The river turned. The walls of matted lianas shut the sound of combat farther away; then only did Tao slacken speed.

"Debbil-debbils," he groaned. McTeague thought of the feeble frauds of parlor magic in the box shoved toward him by the girl, simple tricks he had brought to fight such magic as he never dreamed—dread, incomprehensible black magic. Had Po Sung trained an ape to speak, a crocodile to talk? He could think of no other explanation, yet that mockery was dissipated when he recalled the words of the ape and its reasoning. This was no parrotlike repetition of words, nor would Po Sung be likely to teach jungle beasts English curses. The terrible Mongolian had invented a new hell into which McTeague plunged, and in that hour his only resolve was to sell life dearly but to die rather than fall into the power of that arch-fiend.

The swish of branches near by roused him. In the waning moonlight of the hour before dawn, he saw a second gray shape swinging along and slowly whimpering inarticulate sounds resembling native lingo. The girl stiffened as she knelt, her hands clutched her round breasts and her cry aroused McTeague's pity.

"Tawa," she moaned, "Tawa chin-chin . . . talk-talkee."

McTeague felt his hair prickling his scalp. The canoe drifted as Tao was frozen by fear. There was the drip-drip of the paddle held in air.

"Tawa, Tawa," called the girl. The ape ceased muttering, then clutched a mat of lianas and swung closer, peering down at the face of the girl now gray-yellow in the frame of bushy curls. There came a scream that curdled McTeague's blood. The hairy arm shot out and caught the girl's hair, and she was lifted from the canoe to twist slowly and struggle feebly until McTeague's gun cracked. Came a howl of pain as the hold was released, the girl slumped in the canoe and the ape streaked into the jungle. The canoe leaped forward.

McTeague let the girl lie in merciful oblivion. His own blood congealed at the horror of this demon-haunted domain of Po Sung. Behind them came the fighting mugger and first ape, and they dared not attempt to turn back.

Gray dawn sifted over moon and stars. Through densely matted lianas McTeague saw patches of pearl-tinted sky and caught lurid gleams of scarlet flowers which breathed a fetid scent as repulsive as the walk-about grounds of crocodiles. The shore was a mass of orchids, with black throats and quivering stamens of yellow, which climbed the branches of gray trees and dead ropes of vines. A bend in the river hid them from the

ape and mugger. The canoe navigated a stretch of stream walled by the furious scarlet of orchids that seemed to announce the master-hand of a gardener planting them like ruddy cliffs along the black flow of river shadow.

When the sun spread gold on the upper reaches of the flower wall, McTeague observed the orchid petals quivering and folding in elongated bulb-shapes of dull yellow. The river widened into a pool, smooth as a mirror bordered with fern and feathery nipa palm. There was lurid and ominous beauty in the place, a menacing and maddening tumult of scarlet orchids of gigantic size, with petals five feet or more in length, their dusky black throats shading to maroon purple. The stamens stood out like knobbed wands thick as a man's thumb. The stench was breath-taking, overpowering, disgusting, yet when he commanded Tao to land he met vigorous protest.

"Catchum die," chattered Tao. He dropped the paddle to scoop water in his palms and suck at it noisily. McTeague snatched the paddle and sent the canoe shoreward. Its prow shoved aside the ferns and he thrust a foot to test the pool rim for a landing foothold, balancing his body with arms outthrust. Instantly the nearest giant flowers lunged forward and he was shocked to helplessness as the great petals wrapped about his bare arm with the cold sensation of serpent scales, yet repulsively flexible and soft.

Paralyzed from amazement he felt himself pulled from the canoe to flounder breast-high in the pool, the petal grip on his arm tenaciously supporting his weight. His arm pained as if constricted by a tourniquet. Tao's screech roused the girl, who first recovered her wits and snatched a knife from Tao's belt. McTeague was trying in vain to tear off the orchid petal. His senses reeled from the anesthetic stench of the orchid throat and he was only vaguely aware that the girl slashed loose gray sections of petals, the veins of which took strength to sever. He slumped into the pool over his head and came up, to clutch at the canoe stern over which he was hauled.

Tearing the petal fragments from his arm he felt the stab of pain, and blood spurted from the pores of a swelling red band. McTeague was horrified with fear of virulent poison. He jabbed his knife into the flesh and sucked vigorously, spitting into the pool as Tao sent the craft from shore.

As the canoe drifted near shore, McTeague saw the orchids move forward on their stems like gorgeous beast-heads craning toward a glut of meat. The whole wall was alert and in motion, lunging out, waving giant flowers to and fro until he could see the supporting jungle trees dead and bleached to the tops. He knew the vampire orchids of the jungle, but never before had he seen such huge ones, or animal greed so voraciously displayed. Adding to horror, the pool narrowed again to river width, arched overhead by the terrible scarlet flowers. It was like the red throat of a medieval dragon yawning for victims.

McTeague turned from the sight and observed a singular phenomenon at the pool. As the sun rose and its hot light gilded the topmost flowers, their petals jerked reluctantly shut, folded into bulb-shaped buds. At his command the paddle halted. They waited until sunlight flooded the pool and the shore was hung with leathery yellow bulbs. The shaded river yielded more slowly to the all-powerful sun. The canoe went on, and as if sentient, aware of meat near by, the tips of petals unfolded like tigers' tongues. There was the sound of creaking and rubber stems writhing like serpents. The sun had worked one of its myriad miracles, but it did

not penetrate into the scarlet funnel more than a hundred yards, where McTeague faced low-hanging scarlet horrors that swayed forward, greedy for prey.

Again the craft was halted and McTeague reached for his box, then busied himself biting caps and fuses on sticks of dynamite. His right arm was swollen to twice its natural size and almost useless. His lips were hot and dry as in fever. The flower stench was terrific and making them all drowsy.

Yelling to Tao to back the canoe he tossed a stick of dynamite at each river shore, and they were drifting on the pool when a deafening roar crashed. There were tearing and slithering sounds. The river roof seemed to lift and a backwash of water rocked their craft.

For some moments debris rained down, brilliant bunches of feathers that had been Paradise birds and lories, ragged tatters of orchid petals, nooses of lianas, then the scarlet wall seemed to subside and float on the water surface, a bridge of vegetation over which McTeague assisted Tao to shove the canoe into sun-drenched water beyond.

To his incredible relief, McTeague breathed cleaner air than the stinking fetidity of the orchid pool. There was clean salt breeze from the sea and tang of ebb-tide which cleared his brain of the poison that stultified his senses. But they faced peril ahead, for as the river turned he saw the tip-tilted cornices of a dwelling built like an old temple of Cathay and knew they approached the house of Po Sung.

Much as he dreaded a meeting with that terrific personage, there was no choice. He hoped his wits and obvious blundering into the place would prove his innocence of intent to thieve pearls. He was too well-known to drop out of sight without enquiry and trouble for any man who held him prisoner. All in all, even Po Sung was a more endurable alternative than a return by the river. Yet his nerves tautened as he saw cultivated gardens, and a long pergolalike bridge spanning the river, completely covered at the far end with the scarlet orchids folded now in yellow buds.

Small channels had been cut from the river, and one of these they followed to a small pool. Red lacquer bridges arched the little streams. The sea-tang was stronger. There were hedges of fragrant ylang-ylang and frangipani, glimpses of orchards and growing plants in prim array, white crushed-coral paths, coolies in wide hats moving about, stone steps of a landing-place which caught McTeague's breath and gaze.

A TALL form in a robe of saffron yellow awaited them, its hands folded in green-banded sleeves. Captain McTeague looked into the grim black eyes of Po Sung.

"Welcome." He spoke in suspiciously bland tones. "I do not often have visitors, Captain McTeague."

His eyes darted like black quicksilver from McTeague's head down his bleeding arm to his river-wet trousers and boots.

"I heard your salute. My servants came running to report a breach in my orchid wall. I did not expect you to dynamite a way to my poor house, Captain McTeague. Why not have come by the sea?"

"No doubt you know the reason, Po Sung. Your boat took a pot-shot at my schooner yesterday. I had no idea of visiting you, but when I put in to make repairs, Tukmoo decided to detain me. I've had a bad night trying to get away and got a caress from your loving orchids. Could I trouble you for some permanganate?"

"My poor house is at your disposal, Captain McTeague."

He followed Po Sung up the path,

with the girl close at his heels. Tao was sent to white-washed huts of coolie workers. On the porch of the house, copper-screened and shaded, McTeague fell into a sea-grass chair and snatched at the tall glass of cool liquid brought by a Dyak servant. He was exhausted and his eyes closed.

When he wakened he was lying on a soft mattress, clad in silk pajamas, and his wounded arm was wrapped with gauze. Light from a horn-sided ceiling lantern showed him a sleeping-room with no other furnishings than his bed and a blue jar of scentless hibiscus along one wall. He was troubled by far-away moanings and yowls from the jungle, as if the great gray men of the woods howled their hate of Po Sung.

Then again he slept and awoke greatly refreshed. The Dyak boy brought a tray of food, highly spiced chicken curry, fruit and rice wine. Evidently Po Sung lived in luxury in his hidden haven. McTeague decided that the tales told of the Mongolian were too luridly flavored by superstition. A devil he might be, but he had extended gentlemanly hospitality to Captain McTeague.

The Dyak boy shaved McTeague and trimmed his bronze beard. He was shown a coral-lined swimming-pool, where he bathed and donned pajamas of heavier silk and thick-soled sandals, returning to the porch where Po Sung sat waving a womanish fan of carved ivory and kingfisher feathers.

"You slept well, Captain McTeague?" he enquired.

"Splendidly, thanks to you, Po Sung."

"I am honored. I feared your rest would be disturbed. The big apes were noisy and my servants worked with torches in the garden. However I am free today to entertain you. No doubt you came for pearls."

He clapped his hands, and the Dyak boy appeared with a lacquer box and placed it on McTeague's lap, then opened the lid. McTeague gazed on such magnificence of pearls as he had never seen, ran his fingers in their glory, poured them from palm to palm, then realizing that his eyes too much reflected the greed he felt of such wealth he resolutely snapped down the lid and motioned the boy to take them away.

"The sight of them makes me want them, of course, but I only *trade* in pearls, and so far only through Quong Yick, who told me that Tukmoo no longer held this lagoon. I came to learn why he let it go, and I fell into his clutches. He took me prisoner and demanded powerful magic to fight your debbil-debbils. I brought my parlor tricks and dynamite. What else could I do? Tukmoo had me where he could force me to do his bidding. Then he had a big feast, and while he was drunk and asleep I came away with Tao the black boy and the girl who was to have been the wife of Tawa, son of Tukmoo. We were pretty badly scared at the apes and muggers on the way here and drifted into the orchid lagoon. I blasted my way through."

Po Sung caressed the silky black mustache which dripped like tar-streams from his upper lip.

"Tukmoo's son is braver than the sorcerer. I admire such courage in youth and have made him independent of the blacks, who are stupid pigs. But it is a pity to separate two lovers, so I was pleased when you brought the girl. They shall be united."

"That's mighty decent of you, Po Sung," said McTeague impulsively. Then, as he saw the basilisk gaze of those black eyes and the sneering smile of the cruel lips, his heart missed a beat. "You mean what you have just said?" he faltered.

"I speak the truth, Captain McTeague. In a few days you shall see for yourself. Meanwhile I should like

to show you some of the magic I have worked here, and the growth of an orchid bulb planted only last night. Come!"

McTeague followed him toward the pergola arching the river. It was still in shadow and the scarlet orchids wide open at the jungle end. At the near approach, thick green stems thrust rosy tips from soft, loose earth. Po Sung's yellow hand pointed, and McTeague saw the stems stretch higher, growing inches as he watched, putting forth buds, and twisting through the bars of the trellis.

"Marvelous, Po Sung. You are another Burbank."

"Again I am honored by your praise. The wild orchid devoured only insects and birds, but under my gardening it is perfected to a man-eating flower fed by blood. It is a hungry thing, Captain McTeague, and only for the foolish assaults of Tukmoo's warriors, the river walls would not have flourished as they do. I planted those bulbs in human carcasses, as this one was planted last night."

McTeague's body jerked. His head came up slowly until he gazed into the terrible eyes of Po Sung.

"You planted a bulb in a human body last night?"

Po Sung nodded.

"Did I not say that I have decided to unite Tawa and his bride? Tawa is now in the jungle. I heard him chattering to you as you came up the river. I hope your shot did not maim him. Tawa's body feeds this full-grown orchid across the bridge. His brain is in the head of a gray man of the woods."

"God in heaven!" breathed McTeague. "You mock me with lies."

Po Sung smiled. His black eyebrows arched.

"You shall see and believe. You are not the first man to doubt the power of Po Sung. One year ago two thieves stole in from the sea. One of them supplied brains to a river crocodile, the other is a gray ape. They were companions in crime, but always fighting. They still fight along the river shore, a most amusing sight, as you must have found it last night."

McTeague felt the tropic heat choking him, yet cold sweat rained down his face. He stumbled over the coral paths as he followed Po Sung to the house and through doorways he scarcely saw, with the smell of chloroform growing stronger, until he stood in a room with white cement walls, a skylight overhead, fitted like a hospital operating-room. Under the open skylight was a huge iron-legged cot, to which the body of a she-ape was strapped, its head swathed in bandages. Two Chinese were clearing away the evidences of surgery, and one of them spoke to Po Sung in accentless English:

"She is doing splendidly."

"The bride of Tawa," announced Po Sung, pointing to the ape. "My assistant, Dr. Feng Chu."

McTeague heard no more. The floor seemed to heave and bludgeon him. He had fainted.

For time of which he had no means of keeping track, McTeague lay on a porch couch, waited on hand and foot by the Dyak boy. Po Sung and Dr. Feng Chu, he learned from the assistant surgeon, were away in the yacht. Po Sung left orders to show Captain McTeague every respect and tell him the casket of pearls was a gift. It was advisable not to attempt to return to his schooner until Po Sung's arrival. The gray apes were troublesome lately.

They troubled McTeague. At night he heard the raucous mirth and mournful calling of Tawa, and saw the ghoulish man-shapes in the starlight. The she-ape in the surgery was also noisy, moaning piteously, and mouthing queer sounds quite different from ape-chatter.

It seemed to McTeague he was still in feverish delirium. He did not want to escape, had no power to attempt it. There were books, but he would not exert himself to read. Wandering about the grounds, he noticed the new orchid had attained a prodigious size and was already beginning to bloom. Mingled with his waking dreams were thoughts of two vampire orchids rooted in the moldering flesh of Tawa and the girl, and their brains in the heads of jungle simians.

There came a day when the assistant surgeon led the she-ape to the grounds and chained her to a tree, where she squatted as inert as McTeague on the porch. He wondered at her limpness until the Chinese told him she was under opiates to keep her quiet while her head healed. Then it flashed to the mind of McTeague that, like the ape, he was being doped. No other explanation accounted for his spineless indifference to his fate. A healthy fear intruded on his half dreams. He was being held for some sinister purpose of Po Sung, and like a fool he had supinely endured.

"Where is Po Sung?" he asked the Chinese.

"You have heard of a remarkable trained ape belonging to a scientist in Java, perhaps? Po Sung hopes to bring it back and turn it into this jungle as a companion for Tawa and the other experiment on the pearl thief, McMahon."

"I have seen pet monkeys freed among their own kind," said McTeague slowly. "The wild monkeys kill them instantly."

The Chinese did not answer, for the she-ape had roused and was leaping to the length of her chains. The tree shook with her vigorous attempts to free herself.

"Now she shall have her lesson to avoid the house when she is at liberty," said the Chinese. He went into the house and appeared again with a whip of long thin lashes barbed with metal. Watching his chance, he swung it at the she-ape. McTeague hated the cruelty of that performance, the furious suffering beast with her blood-red eyes, the streaks of blood spurting from her flanks and the cold-blooded Chinese lashing with all his strength. His own blood boiled, raced, lashed him to fury that combated the dope he was now certain had been fed him in the spicy curries at mealtimes.

When the ape sank down quivering and exhausted, the coolies rushed forward and unshackled her, and again the lash sang through the air and lifted tufts of skin. With a bound she was up and staggering uncertainly away, to disappear over the bridge into the jungle. The Chinese coiled his whip and returned to the house.

That day McTeague scraped his food into a towel and hid it under his mattress, then wandered to the gardens and ate fruit. Already he felt lighter, freer, but his nerves ached for the sedative. He realized a new peril, a craving for opium fed him, that would be worse than slavery unless he escaped at once. But he did not know how closely his movements were guarded.

He returned to the porch. The assistant surgeon was talking to a coolie, whom he dismissed. He asked McTeague to come with him to the surgery, where he filled a hypodermic needle, then laid yellow fingers on the white man's arm.

"No you don't," exploded McTeague. "You've doped me long enough. Po Sung won't use my carcass for his devil-orchids unless he kills my brain first." His fist shot out, caught the point of the yellow jaw, and with a screech the Chinese doubled up on the floor. McTeague heard running feet and slammed shut the metal door of the surgery just as yellow men lunged into view. The bolt rang home. He had barricaded himself in the cement-walled room with the unconscious yellow man.

For a few moments he felt a huge satisfaction, but it passed as the Chinese stirred. He hauled him to the cot and strapped him with bonds that had held the she-ape. Then he mopped his sweaty face and considered. From the open skylight he heard sounds of some alarm. The yellow men had thundered on the door, then departed. Using a small ladder, he climbed to the roof opening and looked from the tiers of roofs down on the domain of Po Sung, the sunset colors on the gleaming lagoon and sea, and he saw there the rakish black yacht whose guns had fired on his schooner. Po Sung had returned.

News of his return agitated the servants, who darted to and fro with flaring torches. Then McTeague saw the cause of their excitement. On the orchid-twined bridge two gray shapes swung, and the closed flower bulbs bobbed like elongated balloons on strings. The river water was stirred by a lashing black tail, and in the rapidly gathering night gloom sounded the booming curses of devils which Po Sung had created, roused now to fury against the arch-fiend.

A fierce, unholy joy filled the breast of Captain McTeague. Below him the yellow surgeon heaved against the binding thongs of the cot. A dancing light low down on the lagoon told of Po Sung's small boat leaving the yacht. He would enter the waterway and meet the rage of his victims, and from his high perch McTeague could defy them all, Po Sung, the mugger and the apes.

No, not all, for a third wavering gray ape came over the bridge, fangs bared in a horrid grin, frightening the torch-bearers back to the house as she advanced. In the smoky light McTeague could see the raw-edged scar about her head which bandages had hidden that day. Her screams were piercing and pitiful, her scrambling weak and uncertain, but she was fearless, for behind her stalked the man-apes; tremendously powerful, long arms swinging to their feet, and before that terrible sight the coolies retreated with wild screeches, slamming doors, moving furniture against all openings.

Up the river bank crawled a glistening black length of scaled ugliness, with jaws snapping.

McTeague heard the sound of ripping and tearing, the furious scream of the simians, then blood-curdling cries. He saw a glare below where the she-ape tossed torches in a heap to blaze and burn, lighting the scene of carnage. He saw human forms, broken and twisted, hurled from the porch, and strips of bamboo walls tossed on the fire. Then he knew his own peril. Sooner or later the apes would slaughter every living thing, tear the house to shreds and break into this surgery. He looked down at the bound yellow man on the cot. This was no time for petty differences.

"The jungle apes are killing the servants," he cried, "and burning the house. We are trapped up here, and Po Sung is on his way by the river to meet a doom he deserves. I'll confess I'm a coward right at this minute. I prefer a shot to that death. Is there a gun within reach?"

He dropped down and unfastened the bonds, then pointed to the ladder, which the Chinese mounted, even climbing out on the roof to look over its edge.

McTeague heard him cry out, a despairing shriek of terror. He leaped up the ladder in time to see a gray shape squatted on the roof dangling the miserable surgeon by one arm and swinging him back and forth. Suddenly her hold broke. The Chinese twisted in the air and fell to the ground, quivered, and then lay still.

McTeague looked into the gleaming red eyes of the she-ape. He had no weapon, but below were cases of sur-

gical knives, his only defense now, his only chance of suicide to escape worse. He dropped from the skylight and his fist crashed into the glass of a case, his fingers fumbled in the darkness among queer contrivances, but none of them knives. He dashed to another case, guided by the faint luminosity of glass, and crashed through it. Then the faint starlight and fire reflection were blotted out. The skylight held the she-ape, and she had dropped inside and sat on the ladder peering at him. He could see her gleaming eyes, hear his own breath sobbing in his throat as his hands fumbled for knives and found only small probes, useless to fight that huge gray death.

He was flattened against the wall beside the case, a fistful of sharp probes ready for the lunge, when he heard her muttering in piteous efforts to control the vocal mechanism of the thick throat.

"Tuan," she muttered, *"Tuan;"* and swung down from the ladder with an arm outstretched. He felt the claws touch his arm gently, and stroke his flesh.

THEN for McTeague blackness fell. He was vaguely aware of being swung in giant arms and feeling a cool wind in his face. His eyes opened. He lay on the upper roof, with the arm of the she-ape holding him firmly. Below, the fire leaped and the sounds of savage destruction went on, but there were no cries of fear now, only the guttural curses of the ape McMahon and war-cries of Papuan jungle uttered by Tawa. Turning his head, McTeague saw the light on the yacht's dingey coming down the river.

"Look," he muttered, and his arm pointed. The she-ape turned.

She saw and understood. In another moment McTeague was seized bodily and swung in air as the she-ape swiftly descended by the tiers of pointed roofs until he was dropped unhurt on the earth. Seizing him by one wrist she ran with him toward the river, where black gloom of trees hid them effectively. There McTeague, still held by his captor, saw the dark swirl of water where the mugger dived. He saw the boat sweep on under the dip of oars, to its doom.

There was an unheaved bow lantern, cries in the night, and the lashing of the mugger's tail, the snapping of its terrible jaws and sea-oaths from its dread throat. Later, a limp, dripping figure crawled to the bank. McTeague could hear its gasping breathing, and the she-ape leaped forward. He was free.

He waited until the she-ape seized that creeping victim escaped from the mugger, and her cry summoned the man-apes, one of whom carried a brand of flaming wood. Its light shone on the yellow face of Po Sung, distorted now by terror he had so often chiseled on faces of other men. McTeague saw the she-ape clutch the long ends of his mustache, curl them about her claws and drag Po Sung by his mouth toward the pergola.

Then he turned away at the dreadful cry that broke. The three apes were tearing Po Sung to bits and stuffing them into the orchid bulbs.

On the river the dingey floated. McTeague darted toward it, plunged in, dragged it to the shallows and secured a floating oar. He glanced back at the river bend and saw the apes flinging bits to the gaping jaws of the mugger. Then he sculled for life toward the lagoon.

A cry from Po Sung's yacht hailed him, but he paid no heed. One man could not catch McTeague on that night of fear, and the others of the crew were staining the black river water with their life-blood. A gleaming stretch of lagoon entrance beckoned to the sea, which was quiet, star-silvered. It was the time of ebb-tide,

an evil hour in Papua, but Captain McTeague was beyond feeling, beyond thinking, horror-drugged, fear-driven, possessing the strength of a maniac as he sculled the boat north.

He did not remember coming to the lagoon where his schooner lay, but the mate told him later that they saw him standing in the boat, swaying from side to side like a drunken man, and through the glass they recognized Captain McTeague.

There was a tremendous feast the day after his return. Tukmoo and his warriors wakened the jungle echoes by their drums. Captain McTeague lay oblivious, and Okey the mate did the honors of the occasion, standing guard over the deck cot where McTeague lay prone, exhausted, weary to death and fighting nightmares.

"You ban wan great man, Captain," Okey explained later. "Tukmoo ban brang pearls off Po Sung. Debbil-debbils ban gone now. How come?"

Tukmoo had raked over the wreckage of Po Sung's house and found the casket of fine pearls. It seemed a trifling reward for laying the debbil-debbils of Po Sung, but Captain McTeague only shuddered and closed his eyes.

"Haul up the mud-hooks and crowd on canvas," he said to Okey. "When Red Murphy and McMahon and Tawa and the she-ape get a grouch on, there'll be hell popping in that jungle. I've seen it for the last time. Not for a ship's hold of pearls will I put in at any lagoon on the Banda shore. They nearly made a monkey of me, Okey. Honored me by fetching a trained orang-outang from Java to hold my witless brains. Maybe they had my measure at that. I was fool enough to go in and idiot enough to escape. A wise man would never have come out alive."

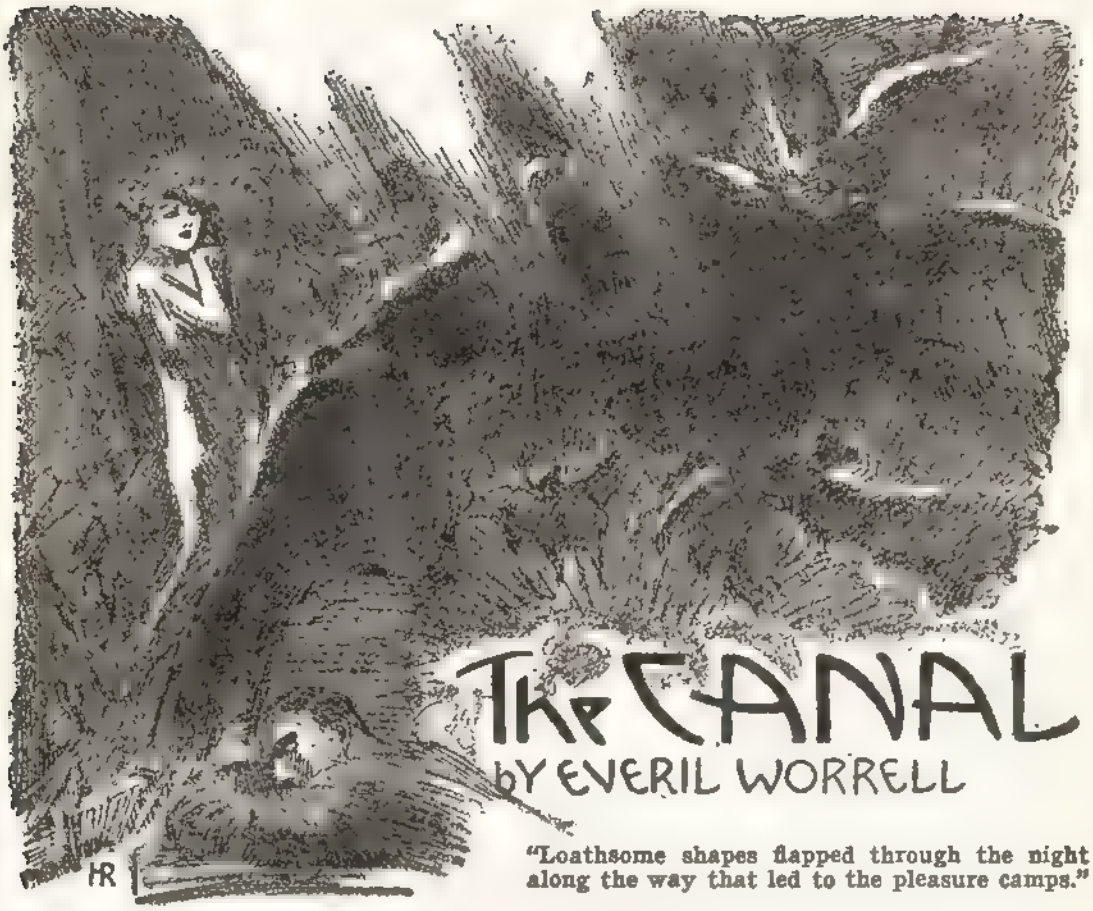
WHITE LILIES

By JOSIE McNAMARA LYDON

White lilies grow above your bed;
A gleaming marble marks its head.
  The swaying lilies, bending low,
  Drip crystal tears; they seem to know
I grieve for your dear spirit fled.

The world tramps by with hurried tread;
It has no time to mourn the dead,
  Nor has it solace to bestow
                Where lilies grow.

Alone my hopeless tears are shed;
Alone my futile prayers are said.
  Dear eyes, that one short year ago
  Were lit with love's celestial glow—
Forever closed; above your bed
                White lilies grow.



The Canal

by Everil Worrell

"Loathsome shapes flapped through the night along the way that led to the pleasure camps."

PAST the sleeping city the river sweeps; along its left bank the old canal creeps.

I did not intend that to be poetry, although the scene is poetic—somberly, gruesomely poetic, like the poems of Poe. Too well I know it—too often have I walked over the grass-grown path beside the reflections of black trees and tumble-down shacks and distant factory chimneys in the sluggish waters that moved so slowly, and ceased to move at all.

I shall be called mad, and I shall be a suicide. I shall take no pains to cover up my trail, or to hide the thing that I shall do. What will it matter, afterward, what they say of me? If they knew the truth—if they could vision, even dimly, the beings with whom I have consorted—if the faintest realization might be theirs of the thing I am becoming, and of the fate from which I am saving their city—then they would call me a great hero. But it does not matter what they call me, as I have said before. Let me write down the things I am about to write down, and let them be taken, as they will be taken, for the last ravings of a madman. The city will be in mourning for the thing I shall have done—but its mourning will be of no consequence beside that other fate from which I shall have saved it.

I HAVE always had a taste for nocturnal prowling. We as a race have grown too intelligent to take seriously any of the old, instinctive fears that preserved us through pre-

ceding generations. Our sole remaining salvation, then, has come to be our tendency to travel in herds. We wander at night—but our objective is somwhere on the brightly lighted streets, or still somewhere where men do not go alone. When we travel far afield, it is in company. Few of my acquaintance, few in the whole city here, would care to ramble at midnight over the grass-grown path I have spoken of; not because they would fear to do so, but because such things are not being done.

Well, it is dangerous to differ individually from one's fellows. It is dangerous to wander from the beaten road. And the fears that guarded the race in the dawn of time and through the centuries were real fears, founded on reality.

A month ago, I was a stranger here. I had just taken my first position—I was graduated from college only three months before, in the spring. I was lonely, and likely to remain so for some time, for I have always been of a solitary nature, making friends slowly.

I had received one invitation out —to visit the camp of a fellow employee in the firm for which I worked, a camp which was located on the farther side of the wide river—the side across from the city and the canal, where the bank was high and steep and heavily wooded, and little tents blossomed all along the water's edge. At night these camps were a string of sparkling lights and tiny, leaping campfires, and the tinkle of music carried faintly far across the calmly flowing water. That far bank of the river was no place for an eccentric, solitary man to love. But the near bank, which would have been an eyesore to the campers had not the river been so wide,—the near bank attracted me from my first glimpse of it.

We embarked in a motor-boat at some distance downstream, and swept up along the near bank, and then out and across the current. I turned my eyes backward. The murk of stagnant water that was the canal, the jumble of low buildings beyond it; the lonely, low-lying waste of the narrow strip of land between canal and river, the dark, scattered trees growing there—I intended to see more of these things.

That week-end bored me, but I repaid myself no later than Monday evening, the first evening when I was back in the city, alone and free. I ate a solitary dinner immediately after leaving the office. I went to my room and slept from 7 until nearly midnight. I wakened naturally, then, for my whole heart was set on exploring the alluring solitude I had discovered. I dressed, slipped out of the house and into the street, started the motor in my roadster which I had left parked at the curb, and drove through the lighted streets.

I left behind that part of town which was thick with vehicles carrying people home from their evening engagements, and began to thread my way through darker and narrower streets. Once I had to back out of a cul-de-sac, and once I had to detour around a closed block. This part of town was not alluring, even to me. It was dismal without being solitary.

But when I had parked my car on a rough, cobbled street that ran directly down into the inky waters of the canal, and crossed a narrow bridge, I was repaid. A few minutes set my feet on the old tow-path where mules had drawn river-boats up and down only a year or so ago. Across the canal now, as I walked upstream at a swinging pace, the miserable shacks where miserable people lived seemed to march with me, and then fell behind. They looked like places in which murders might be committed, every one of them.

The bridge I had crossed was near the end of the city going north, as the canal marked its western extremity.

Ten minutes of walking, and the dismal shacks were quite a distance behind, the river was farther away and the strip of waste land much wider and more wooded, and tall trees across the canal marched with me as the evil-looking houses had done before. Far and faint, the sound of a bell in the city reached my ears. It was midnight.

I stopped, enjoyed the desolation around me. It had the savor I had expected and hoped for. I stood for some time looking up at the sky, watching the low drift of heavy clouds, which were visible in the dull reflected glow from distant lights in the heart of the city, so that they appeared to have a lurid phosphorescence of their own. The ground under my feet, on the contrary, was utterly devoid of light. I had felt my way carefully, knowing the edge of the canal partly by instinct, partly by the even more perfect blackness of the water in it, and even holding pretty well to the path, because it was perceptibly sunken below the ground beside it.

Now as I stood motionless in this spot, my eyes upcast, my mind adrift with strange fancies, suddenly my feelings of satisfaction and well-being gave way to something different. Fear was an emotion unknown to me—for those things which make men fear, I had always loved. A graveyard at night was to me a charming place for a stroll and meditation.

But now, the roots of my hair seemed to move upright on my head, and along all the length of my spine I was conscious of a prickling, tingling sensation—such as my forefathers may have felt in the jungle when the hair on their backs stood up as the hair of my head was doing now. Also, I was afraid to move; and I knew that there were eyes upon me, and that that was why I was afraid to move. I was afraid of those eyes—afraid to see them, to look into them.

All this while, I stood perfectly still, my face uptilted toward the sky. But after a terrible mental effort, I mastered myself.

Slowly—slowly, with an attempt to propitiate the owner of the unseen eyes by my casual manner, I lowered my own. I looked straight ahead—at the softly swaying silhouette of the tree-tops across the canal as they moved gently in the cool night wind; at the mass of blackness that was those trees, and the opposite shore; at the shiny blackness where the reflections of the clouds glinted vaguely and disappeared, that was the canal. And again I raised my eyes a little, for just across the canal where the shadows massed most heavily, there was that at which I must look more closely. And now, as I grew accustomed to the greater blackness and my pupils expanded, I dimly discerned the contours of an old boat or barge, half sunken in the water.

An old, abandoned canal-boat.

But was I dreaming, or was there a white-clad figure seated on the roof of the low cabin aft, a pale, heart-shaped face gleaming strangely at me from the darkness, the glow of two eyes seeming to light up the face, and to detach it from the darkness?

Surely, there could be no doubt as to the eyes. They shone as the eyes of animals shine in the dark—with a phosphorescent gleam, and a glimmer of red! Well, I had heard that some human eyes have that quality at night.

But what a place for a human being to be—a girl, too, I was sure. That daintily heart-shaped face was the face of a girl, surely—I was seeing it clearer and clearer, either because my eyes were growing more accustomed to peering into the deeper shadows, or because of that phosphorescence in the eyes that stared back at me.

I RAISED my voice softly, not to break too much the stillness of the night.

"Hello! who's there? Are you lost, or marooned, and can I help?"

There was a little pause. I was conscious of a soft lapping at my feet. A stronger night wind had sprung up, was ruffling the dark waters. I had been over-warm, and where it struck me the perspiration turned cold on my body, so that I shivered uncontrollably.

"You can stay—and talk awhile, if you will. I am lonely, but not lost—I—I live here."

I could hardly believe my ears. The voice was little more than a whisper, but it had carried clearly—a girl's voice, sure enough. And she lived *there*—in an old, abandoned canal-boat, half submerged in the stagnant water.

"You are not *alone* there?"

"No, not alone. My father lives here with me, but he is deaf—and he sleeps soundly."

Did the night wind blow still colder, as though it came to us from some unseen, frozen sea—or was there something in her tone that chilled me, even as a strange attraction drew me toward her? I wanted to draw near to her, to see closely the pale, heart-shaped face, to lose myself in the bright eyes that I had seen shining in the darkness. I wanted—I wanted to hold her in my arms, to find her mouth with mine, to kiss it——

With a start, I realized the nature of my thoughts, and for an instant lost all thought in surprize. Never in my twenty-two years had I felt love before. My fancies had been otherwise directed—a moss-grown, fallen gravestone was a dearer thing to me to contemplate than the fairest face in all the world. Yet, surely, what I felt now was love!

I took a reckless step nearer the edge of the bank.

"Could I come over to you?" I begged. "It's warm, and I don't mind a wetting. It's late, I know—but I would give a great deal to sit beside you and talk, if only for a few minutes before I go back to town. It's a lonely place here for a girl like you to live—your father should not mind if you exchange a few words with someone occasionally."

Was it the unconventionality of my request that made her next words sound like a long-drawn shudder of protest? There was a strangeness in the tones of her voice that held me wondering, every time she spoke.

"No—no. Oh, no! *You must not swim across.*"

"Then—could I come tomorrow, or some day soon, in the daytime; and would you let me come on board then—or would you come on shore and talk to me, perhaps?"

"Not in the daytime—*never* in the daytime!"

Again the intensity of her low-toned negation held me spellbound.

It was not her sense of the impropriety of the hour, then, that had dictated her manner. For surely, any girl with the slightest sense of the fitness of things would rather have a tryst by daytime than after midnight—yet there was an inference in her last words that if I came again it should be again at night.

Still feeling the spell that had enthralled me, as one does not forget the presence of a drug in the air that is stealing one's senses, even when those senses begin to wander and to busy themselves with other things, I yet spoke shortly.

"Why do you say, 'Never in the daytime?' Do you mean that I may come more than this once at night, though now you won't let me cross the canal to you at the expense of my own clothes, and you won't put down your plank or drawbridge, or whatever you come on shore with, and talk to me here for only a moment? I'll come again, if you'll let me talk to you instead of calling across the

water. I'll come again, any time you will let me—day or night, I don't care. I want to come to you. But I only ask you to explain. If I came in the daytime and met your father, wouldn't that be the best thing to do? Then we could be really acquainted—we could be friends."

"In the night time, my father sleeps. In the daytime, *I* sleep. How could I talk to you, or introduce you to my father then? If you came on board this boat in the daytime, you would find my father—and you would be sorry. As for me, I would be sleeping. I could never introduce you to my father, do you see?"

"You sleep soundly, you and your father." Again there was pique in my voice.

"Yes, we sleep soundly."

"And always at different times?"

"Always at different times. We are on guard—one of us is always on guard. We have been hardly used, down there in your city. And we have taken refuge here. And we are always—always—on guard."

The resentment vanished from my breast, and I felt my heart go out to her anew. She was so pale, so pitiful in the night. My eyes were learning better and better how to pierce the darkness, they were giving me a more definite picture of my companion—if I could think of her as a companion, between myself and whom stretched the black water.

The sadness of the lonely scene, the perfection of the solitude itself, these things contributed to her pitifulness. Then there was that strangeness of atmosphere of which, even yet, I had only partly taken note. There was the strange, shivering chill, which yet did not seem like the healthful chill of a cool evening. In fact, it did not prevent me from feeling the oppression of the night, which was unusually sultry. It was like a little breath of deadly cold that came and went, and yet did not alter the temperature of the air itself, as the small ripples on the surface of water do not concern the water even a foot down.

And even that was not all. There was an unwholesome smell about the night—a dank, moldy smell that might have been the very breath of death and decay. Even I, the connoisseur in all things dismal and unwholesome, tried to keep my mind from dwelling overmuch upon that smell. What it must be to live breathing it constantly in, I could not think. But no doubt the girl and her father were used to it; and no doubt it came from the stagnant water of the canal and from the rotting wood of the old, half-sunken boat that was their refuge.

My heart throbbed with pity again. Their refuge—what a place! And my clearer vision of the girl showed me that she was pitifully thin, even though possessed of the strange face that drew me to her. Her clothes hung around her like old rags, but hers was no scarecrow aspect. Although little flesh clothed her bones, her very bones were beautiful. I was sure the little, pale, heart-shaped face would be more beautiful still, if I could only see it closely. I must see it closely—I must establish some claim to consideration as a friend of the strange, lonely crew of the half-sunken wreck.

"This is a poor place to call a refuge," I said finally. "One might have very little money, and yet do somewhat better. Perhaps I might help you—I am sure I could. If your ill-treatment in the city was because of poverty—I am not rich, but I could help that. I could help you a little with money—if you would let me—or, in any case, I could find a position for you. I'm sure I could do that."

The eyes that shone fitfully toward me like two small pools of water intermittently lit by a cloud-swept sky seemed to glow more brightly. She had been half crouching, half sitting

on top of the cabin; now she leaped to her feet with one quick, sinuous, abrupt motion, and took a few rapid, restless steps to and fro before she answered.

When she spoke, her voice was little more than a whisper; yet surely rage was in its shrill sibilance.

"Fool! Do you think you would be helping me, to tie me to a desk, to shut me behind doors, away from freedom, away from the delight of doing my own will, of seeking my own way? Never, never would I let you do that. Rather this old boat, rather a deserted grave under the stars, for my home!"

A boundless surprize swept over me, and a positive feeling of kinship with this strange being, whose face I had hardly seen, possessed me. So I myself might have spoken—so I had often felt, though I had never dreamed of putting my thoughts so definitely, so forcibly. My regularized daytime life was a thing I thought little of; I really lived only in my nocturnal prowlings. Why, this girl was right! All of life should be free—and spent in places that interested and attracted.

How little, how little I knew, that night, that dread forces were tugging at my soul, were finding entrance to it and easy access through the morbid weakness of my nature! How little I knew at what a cost I deviated so radically from my kind, who herd in cities and love well-lit ways and the sight of man, and sweet and wholesome places to be solitary in, when the desire for solitude comes over them!

That night it seemed to me that there was but one important thing in life—to allay the angry passion my unfortunate words had aroused in the breast of my beloved, and to win from her some answering feeling.

"I understand—much better than you think," I whispered tremulously.

"What I want is to see you again, to come to know you. And to serve you in any way that I may. Surely, there must be something in which I can be of use to you. All you have to do from tonight on forever, is to command me. I swear it!"

"You swear *that*—you do swear it?"

Delighted at the eagerness of her words, I lifted my hand toward the dark heavens.

"I swear it. From this night on, forever—I swear it."

"Then listen. Tonight you may not come to me, nor I to you. I do not want you to board this boat, not tonight, not any night. And most of all, not any day. But do not look so sad. I will come to you. No, not tonight. Perhaps not for many nights—yet before very long. I will come to you there, on the bank of the canal, when the water in the canal ceases to flow."

I must have made a gesture of impatience, or of despair. It sounded like a way of saying "never"—for why should the water in the canal cease to flow? She read my thoughts in some way, for she answered them.

"You do not understand. I am speaking seriously—I am promising to meet you there on the bank, and soon. For the water within these banks is moving slower, always slower. Higher up, I have heard that the canal has been drained. Between these lower locks, the water still seeps in and drops slowly, slowly downstream. But there will come a night when it will be quite, quite stagnant—and on that night I will come to you. And when I come, I will ask of you a favor. And you will keep your oath."

It was all the assurance I could get that night. She had come back to the side of the cabin where she had sat crouched before, and she re-

sumed again that posture and sat still and silent, watching me. Sometimes I could see her eyes upon me, and sometimes not. But I felt that their gaze was unwavering. The little cold breeze, which I had finally forgotten while I was talking with her, was blowing again, and the unwholesome smell of decay grew heavier before the dawn.

She would not speak again, nor answer me when I spoke to her, and I grew nervous, and strangely ill at ease.

At last I went away. And in the first faint light of dawn I slipped up the stairs of my rooming-house, and into my own room.

I was deadly tired at the office next day. And day after day slipped away and I grew more and more weary. For a man can not wake day and night without suffering, especially in hot weather, and that was what I was doing. I haunted the old tow-path and waited, night after night, on the bank opposite the sunken boat. Sometimes I saw my lady of the darkness, and sometimes not. When I saw her, she spoke little; but sometimes she sat there on the top of the cabin and let me watch her till the dawn, or until the strange uneasiness that was like fright drove me from her and back to my room, where I tossed restlessly in the heat and dreamed strange dreams, half waking, till the sun shone in on my forehead and I tumbled into my clothes and down to the office again.

Once I asked her why she had made the fanciful condition that she would not come ashore to meet me until the waters of the canal had ceased to run. (How eagerly I studied those waters; how I stole away at noontime more than once, not to approach the old boat, but to watch the almost imperceptible downward drift of bubbles, bits of straw, twigs, rubbish!)

My questioning displeased her, and I asked her that no more. It was enough that she chose to be whimsical. My part was to wait.

It was more than a week later that I questioned her again, this time on a different subject. And after that, I curbed my curiosity relentlessly.

"Never speak to me of things you do not understand about me. Never again, or I will not show myself to you again. And when I walk on the path yonder, it will not be with you."

I had asked her what form of persecution she and her father had suffered in the city, that had driven them out to this lonely place, and where in the city they had lived.

Frightened seriously lest I lose the ground I was sure I had gained with her, I was about to speak of something else. But before I could find the words, her low voice came to me again.

"It was horrible—horrible! Those little houses below the bridge, those houses along the canal—tell me, are they not worse than my boat? Life there was shut in, and furtive. I was not free as I am now—and the freedom I will soon have will make me forget the things I have not yet forgotten. The screaming, the reviling and cursing! Fear and flight! As you pass back by those houses, think how you would like to be shut in one of them, and in fear of your life. And then think of them no more—for I would forget them, and I will never speak of them again!"

I dared not answer her. I was surprized that she had vouchsafed me so much. But surely her words meant this—that before she had come to live on the decaying, water-rotted old boat, she had lived in one of those horrible houses I passed by on my way to her. Those houses, each of which looked like the predestined scene of a murder!

As I left her that night, I felt that I was very daring.

"One or two nights more and you will walk beside me," I called to her. "I have watched the water at noon, and it hardly moves at all. I threw a scrap of paper into the canal, and it whirled and swung a little where a thin skim of oil lay on the water down there—oil from the big, dirty city you are well out of. But though I watched and watched, I could not see it move downward at all. Perhaps tomorrow night, or the night after, you will walk on the bank with me. I hope it will be clear and moonlight; and I will be near enough to see you clearly—as well as you seem always to see me in darkness or moonlight, equally well. And perhaps I will kiss you—but not unless you let me."

And yet, the next day, for the first time my thoughts were definitely troubled. I had been living in a dream—I began to speculate concerning the end of the path on which my feet were set.

I had conceived, from the first, such a horror of those old houses by the canal! They were well enough to walk past, nursing gruesome thoughts for a midnight treat. But, much as I loved all that was weird and eery about the girl I was wooing so strangely, it was a little too much for my fancy that she had come from them.

By this time, I had become decidedly unpopular in my place of business. Not that I had made enemies, but that my peculiar ways had caused too much adverse comment. It would have taken very little, I think, to have made the entire office force decide that I was mad. After the events of the next twenty-four hours, and after this letter is found and read, they will be sure that they knew it all along! At this time, however, they were punctiliously polite to me, and merely let me alone as much as possible—which suited me perfectly. I dragged wearily through day after day, exhausted for lack of sleep, conscious of their speculative glances, living only for the night to come.

But on this day, I approached the man who had invited me to the camp across the river, who had unknowingly shown me the way that led to my love.

"Have you ever noticed the row of tumble-down houses along the canal on the city side?" I asked him.

He gave me an odd look. I suppose he sensed the significance of my breaking silence after so long to speak of *them*—sensed that in some way I had a deep interest in them.

"You have odd tastes, Morton," he said after a moment. "I suppose you wander into strange places sometimes—I've heard you speak of an enthusiasm for graveyards at night. But my advice to you is to keep away from those houses. They're unsavory, and their reputation is unsavory. Positively, I think you'd be in danger of your life, if you go poking around there. They have been the scene of several murders, and a dope den or two has been cleaned out of them. Why in the world you should want to investigate them——"

"I don't expect to investigate them," I said testily. "I was merely interested in them—from the outside. To tell you the truth, I'd heard a story, a rumor—never mind where. But you say there have been murders there—I suppose this rumor I heard may have had to do with an attempted one. There was a girl who lived there with her father once—and they were set upon there, or something of the sort, and had to run away. Did you ever hear *that* story?"

Barrett gave me an odd look such as one gives in speaking of a past horror so dreadful that the mere speaking of it makes it live terribly again.

"What you say reminds me of a horrible thing that was said to have happened down there once," he said. "It was in all the papers. A little

child disappeared in one of those houses—and a couple of poor lodgers who lived there, a girl and her father, were accused of having made away with it. They were accused—they were accused—oh, well, I don't like to talk about such things. It was too dreadful. The child's body was found—*part* of it was found. It was mutilated, and the people in the house seemed to believe it had been mutilated in order to conceal the manner of its death—there was an ugly wound in the throat, it finally came out, and it seemed as if the child might have been bled to death. It was found in the girl's room, hidden away. The old man and his daughter escaped, before the police were called. The countryside was scoured for them—the whole country was scoured, but they were never found. Why, you must have read it in the papers, several years ago."

I nodded, with a heavy heart. I *had* read it in the papers, I remembered now. And again, a terrible questioning came over me. Who was this girl, *what* was this girl, who seemed to have my heart in her keeping?

Why did not a merciful God let me die then?

Befogged with exhaustion, bemused in a dire enchantment, my mind was incapable of thought. And yet, some soul-process akin to that which saves the sleepwalker poised at perilous heights sounded its warning now.

My mind was filled with doleful images. There were women—I had heard and read—who slew to satisfy a blood-lust. There were ghosts, specters—call them what you will, their names have been legion in the dark pages of that lore which dates back to the infancy of the races of the earth—who retained even in death this blood-lust. Vampires—they had been called that. I had read of them. Corpses by day, spirits of evil by night, roaming abroad in their own forms or in the forms of bats or unclean beasts, killing body and soul of their victims—for whoever dies of the repeated "kiss" of the vampire, which leaves its mark on the throat and draws the blood from the body, becomes a vampire also—of such beings I had read.

And, horror of horrors! In that last cursed day at the office, I remembered reading of these vampires—these undead—that in their nocturnal flights they had one limitation—*they could not cross running water.*

THAT night I went my usual nightly way with tears of weakness on my face—for my weakness was supreme, and I recognized fully at last the misery of being the victim of an enchantment stronger than my feeble will. But I went.

I approached the neighborhood of the canal-boat as the distant city clock chimed the first stroke of 12. It was the dark of the moon and the sky was overcast. Heat-lightning flickered low in the sky, seeming to come from every point of the compass and circumscribe the horizon, as if unseen fires burned behind the rim of the world. By its fitful glimmer, I saw a new thing—between the old boat and the canal bank stretched a long, slim; solid-looking shadow—a plank had been let down! In that moment, I realized that I had been playing with powers of evil which had no intent now to let me go, which were indeed about to lay hold upon me with an inexorable grasp. Why had I come tonight? Why, but that the spell of the enchantment laid upon me was a thing more potent, and far more unbreakable, than any wholesome spell of love? The creature I sought out—oh, I remembered now, with the cold perspiration beading my brow, the lore hidden away between the covers of the dark old book which I had read so many years ago and half forgotten!—until dim memories of it

stirred within me, this last day and night.

My lady of the night! No woman of wholesome flesh and blood and odd perverted tastes that matched my own, but one of the undead. In that moment, I knew it, and knew that the vampires of old legends polluted still, in these latter days, the fair surface of the earth.

And on the instant, behind me in the darkness there was the crackle of a twig, and something brushed against my arm!

This, then, was the fulfilment of my dream. I knew, without turning my head, that the pale, dainty face with its glowing eyes was near my own—that I had only to stretch out my arm to touch the slender grace of the girl I had so longed to draw near. I knew, and should have felt the rapture I had anticipated. Instead, the roots of my hair prickled coldly, unendurably, as they had on the night when I had first sighted the old boat. The miasmic odors of the night, heavy and oppressive with heat and unrelieved by a breath of air, all but overcame me, and I fought with myself to prevent my teeth clicking in my head. The little waves of coldness I had felt often in this spot were chasing over my body; yet they were not from any breeze; the leaves on the trees hung down motionless, as though they were actually wilting on their branches.

With an effort, I turned my head.

Two hands caught me around my neck. The pale face was so near, that I felt the warm breath from its nostrils fanning my cheek.

And, suddenly, all that was wholesome in my perverted nature rose uppermost. I longed for the touch of the red mouth, like a dark flower opening before me in the night. I longed for it—and yet more I dreaded it. I shrank back, catching in a powerful grip the fragile wrists of the hands that strove to hold me. I must not—I must not yield to the faintness that I felt stealing languorously over me.

I was facing down the path toward the city. A low rumble of thunder—the first—broke the torrid hush of the summer night. A glare of lightning seemed to tear the night asunder, to light up the whole universe. Overhead, the clouds were careening madly in fantastic shapes, driven by a wind that swept the upper heavens without as yet causing even a trembling in the air lower down. And far down the canal, that baleful glare seemed to play around and hover over the little row of shanties—murder-cursed, and haunted by the ghost of a dead child.

My gaze was fixed on them, while I held away from me the pallid face and fought off the embrace that sought to overcome my resisting will. And so a long moment passed. The glare faded out of the sky, and a greater darkness took the world. But there was a near, more menacing glare fastened upon my face—the glare of two eyes that watched mine, that had watched me as I, unthinking, stared down at the dark houses.

This girl—this woman who had come to me at my own importunate requests, did not love me, since I had shrunk from her. She did not love me; but it was not only that. She had watched me as I gazed down at the houses that held her dark past—and I was sure that she divined my thoughts. She knew my horror of those houses—she knew my new-born horror of *her*. And she hated me for it, hated me more malignantly than I had believed a human being could hate.

And at that point in my thoughts, I felt my skin prickle and my scalp rise again: could a *human being* cherish such hatred as I read, trembling more and more, in those glowing fires lit with what seemed to me more like

the fires of hell than any light that ought to shine in a woman's eyes?

And through all this, not a word had passed between us!

So far I have written calmly. I wish that I could write on so, to the end. If I could do that there might be one or two of those who will regard this as the document of a maniac, who would believe the horrors of which I am about to write.

But I am only flesh and blood. At this point in the happenings of the awful night, my calmness deserted me—at this point I felt that I had been drawn into the midst of a horrible nightmare from which there was no escape, no waking! As I write, this feeling again overwhelms me, until I can hardly write at all—until, were it not for the thing which I must do, I would rush out into the street and run, screaming, until I was caught and dragged away, to be put behind strong iron bars. Perhaps I would feel safe there—perhaps!

I know that, terrified at the hate I saw confronting me in those redly gleaming eyes, I would have slunk away. The two thin hands that caught my arm again were strong enough to prevent that, however. I had been spared her kiss—I was not to escape from the oath I had taken to serve her.

"You promised—you swore," she hissed in my ear. "And tonight you are to keep your oath."

I felt my senses reel. My oath—yes, I had an oath to keep. I had lifted my hand toward the dark heavens, and sworn to serve her in any way she chose—freely, and of my own volition, I had sworn.

I sought to evade her.

"Let me help you back to your boat," I begged. "You have no kindly feeling for me—and—you have seen it—I love you no longer. I will go back to the city—you can go back to your father, and forget that I broke your peace."

The laughter that greeted my speech I shall never forget—not in the depths under the scummy surface of the canal—not in the empty places between the worlds, where my tortured soul may wander.

"So you do not love me, and I hate you! Fool! Have I waited these weary months for the water to stop, only to go back now? After my father and I returned here and found the old boat rotting in the drained canal, and took refuge in it; when the water was turned into the canal while I slept, so that I could never escape until its flow should cease, *because of the thing that I am*—even then I dreamed of tonight.

"When the imprisonment we still shared ceased to matter to my father—come on board the deserted boat tomorrow, and see why, if you dare!—still I dreamed on, of tonight!

"I have been lonely, desolate, starving—now the whole world shall be mine! And by *your* help!"

I asked her, somehow, what she wanted of me, and a madness overcame me so that I hardly heard her reply. Yet somehow, I knew that there was that on the opposite shore of the great river where the pleasure camps were, that she wanted to find. In the madness of my terror, she made me understand and obey her.

I must carry her in my arms across the long bridge over the river, deserted in the small hours of the night!

The way back to the city was long tonight—long. She walked behind me, and I turned my eyes neither to right nor left. Only as I passed the tumbledown houses, I saw their reflection in the canal and trembled so that I could have fallen to the ground, at the thoughts of the little child this woman had been accused of slaying there, and at the certainty I felt that she was reading my thoughts.

And now the horror that engulfed me darkened my brain.

I know that we set our feet upon the long, wide bridge that spanned the river. I know the storm broke there, so that I battled for my footing, almost for my life, it seemed, against the pelting deluge. And the horror I had invoked was in my arms, clinging to me, burying its head upon my shoulder. So increasingly dreadful had my pale-faced companion become to me, that I hardly thought of her now as a woman at all—only as a demon of the night.

The tempest raged still as she leaped down out of my arms on the other shore. And again I walked with her against my will, while the trees lashed their branches madly around me, showing the pale undersides of their leaves in the vivid frequent flashes that rent the heavens.

On and on we went, branches flying through the air and missing us by a miracle of ill fortune. Such as she and I are not slain by falling branches. The river was a welter of whitecaps, flattened down into strange shapes by the pounding rain. The clouds as we glimpsed them were like devils flying through the sky.

Past dark tent after dark tent we stole, and past a few where lights burned dimly behind their canvas walls. And at last we came to an old quarry. Into its artificial ravine she led me, and up to a crevice in the rock wall.

"Reach in your hand and pull out the loose stone you will feel," she whispered. "It closes an opening that leads into deep caverns. A human hand must remove that stone—your hand must move it!"

Why did I struggle so to disobey her? Why did I fail? It was as though I *knew*—but my failure was foreordained—I had taken oath!

If you who read have believed that I have set down the truth thus far, the little that is left you will call the ravings of a madman overtaken by his madness. Yet these things happened.

I stretched out my arm, driven by a compulsion I could not resist. At arm's length in the niche in the rock, I felt something move—the loose rock, a long, narrow fragment, much larger than I had expected. Yet it moved easily, seeming to swing on a natural pivot. Outward it swung, toppling toward me—a moment more and there was a swift rush of the ponderous weight I had loosened. I leaped aside and went down, my forehead grazed by the rock.

For a brief moment I must have been unconscious. But only for a moment. My head a stabbing agony of pain, unreal lights flashing before my eyes, I yet knew the reality of the storm that beat me down as I struggled to my feet. I knew the reality of the dark, loathsome shapes that passed me in the dark, crawling out of the orifice in the rock and flapping through the wild night, along the way that led to the pleasure camps.

So the caverns I had laid open to the outer world were infested with bats. I had been inside unlit caverns, and had heard there the squeaking of the things, felt and heard the flapping of their wings—*but never in all my life before had I seen bats as large as men and women!*

Sick and dizzy from the blow on my head, and from disgust, I crept along the way they were going. If I touched one of them, I felt that I should die of horror.

Now, at last, the storm abated, and a heavy darkness made the whole world seem like the inside of a tomb.

Where the tents stood in a long row, the number of the monster bats seemed to diminish. It was as though —horrible thought!—they were

creeping into the tents, with their slumbering occupants.

At last I came to a lighted tent, and paused, crouching so that the dim radiance that shone through the canvas did not touch me in the shadows. And there I waited, but not for long. There was a dark form silhouetted against the tent—a movement of the flap of the tent—a rustle and confusion, and the dark thing was again in silhouette—but with a difference in the quality of the shadow. The dark thing was *inside* the tent now, its bat wings extending across the entrance through which it had crept.

Fear held me spellbound. And as I looked the shadow changed again—imperceptibly, so that I could not have told *how* it changed.

But now it was not the shadow of a bat, but of a woman.

"The storm—the storm! I am lost, exhausted—I crept in here, to beg for refuge until the dawn!"

That low, thrilling, sibilant voice—too well I knew it!

Within the tent I heard a murmur of acquiescent voices. At last I began to understand.

I knew the nature of the woman I had carried over the river in my arms, the woman who would not even cross the canal until the water should have ceased utterly to flow. I remembered books I had read—*Dracula*—other books, and stories. I knew they were true books and stories, now—I knew those horrors existed for me.

I had indeed kept my oath to the creature of darkness—I had brought her to her kind, under her guidance. I had let them loose in hordes upon the pleasure camps. The campers were doomed—and through them, others——

I forgot my fear. I rushed from my hiding-place up to the tent door, and there I screamed and called aloud.

"Don't take her in—don't let her stay—nor the others, that have crept into the other tents! Wake all the campers—they will sleep on to their destruction! Drive out the interlopers—drive them out quickly! *They are not human—no, and they are not bats.* Do you hear me?—do you understand?"

I was fairly howling, in a voice that was strange to me.

"She is a vampire—they are all vampires. *Vampires!*"

Inside the tent I heard a new voice. "What can be the matter with that poor man?" the voice said. It was a woman's, and gentle.

"Crazy—somebody out of his senses, dear," a man's voice answered. "Don't be frightened."

And then the voice I knew so well—so well: "I saw a falling rock strike a man on the head in the storm. He staggered away, but I suppose it crazed him."

I waited for no more. I ran away, madly, through the night and back across the bridge to the city.

Next day—today—I boarded the sunken canal-boat. It is the abode of death—no woman could have lived there—only such an one as *she*. The old man's corpse was there—he must have died long, long ago. The smell of death and of decay on the boat was dreadful.

Again, I felt that I understood. Back in those awful houses, she had committed the crime when first she became the thing she is. And he—her father—less sin-steeped, and less accursed, attempted to destroy the evidence of her crime, and fled with her, but died without becoming like her. She had said that one of those two was always on watch—did he indeed divide her vigil on the boat? What more fitting—the dead standing watch with the undead! And no wonder that she would not let me board the craft of death, even to carry her away.

And still I feel the old compulsion. I have been spared her kiss—but for a little while. Yet I will not let the

power of my oath to her draw me back, till I enter the caverns with her and creep forth in the form of a bat to prey upon mankind. Before that can happen, I too will die.

TODAY in the city I heard that a horde of strange insects or small animals infested the pleasure camps last night. Some said, with horror-bated breath, that they perhaps were rats. None of them was seen; but in the morning nearly every camper had a strange, deep wound in his throat. I almost laughed aloud. They were so horrified at the idea of an army of rats, creeping into the tents and biting the sleeping occupants on their throats! If they had seen what I saw—if they knew that they are doomed to spread corruption——

So my own death will not be enough. Today I bought supplies for blasting. Tonight I will set my train of dynamite, from the hole I made in the cliff where the vampires creep in and out, along the row of tents, as far as the last one—then I shall light my fuse. It will be done before the dawn. Tomorrow, the city will mourn its dead and execrate my name.

And then, at last, in the slime beneath the unmoving waters of the canal, I shall find peace! But perhaps it will not be peace—for I shall seek it midway between the old boat with its cargo of death and the row of dismal houses where a little child was done to death when first *she* became the thing she is. That is my expiation.

THE JUNGLE

By CRISTEL HASTINGS

The snakelike vines reach out on every side,
Weaving a swing where chimpanzees may ride
And chatter in the sullen, lifeless noon
While all about the purple shadows swoon.

The crumbling logs of trees lie everywhere,
Encrusted with rare orchids here and there—
Deceiving bits of loveliness to lure
Unwary feet that brave the sodden moor.

The moon looks in between the fronded beams
Of wicked plants that stand, until it seems
The night is made of moss and leaf and bole—
A hopeless wood—a place without a soul.

Never a star looks in this silent gloom—
This tangled maze of green from Nature's loom—
Never a sound, save macaws' chattering
And chimpanzees'—haunting their aerial swing.

BELLS of OCEANA

BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

"There stood the creature who had come up from the depths."

IT WAS on a heavily laden troopship, westward heading. Hours before, the sun had gone down toward China, trailing ebon night behind her. For a full week, since dropping the California coast behind us, there had been nothing in all the wild waste of waters for us to see save ourselves. No ship's funnels broke the lowering horizon, no sign of land, for our skipper had chosen a passage lying somewhere in between the usual steamer lanes. The nearest land, save that which stretched in eternal darkness some three miles below us, was more than a thousand miles beyond the southern horizon. We were just a single ship, burdened with a precious freight of souls, upon an ocean that seemed endless. The first day out had been squally, and everyone had been sick, save those of us who had gone down to the sea in ships before. But with the dawning of the second morning the sea had calmed down, and our vessel rode through the blue, toward the horizon bowl which ever crept before us, in the golden wake of the setting sun. The voyage, if the old salts spoke truly, would be uneventful; but, with that strange premonitory feeling which comes to all of us at times, I did not believe them.

Something, from the very first, warned me that our voyage was ill-fated. I couldn't explain my feeling. It wasn't a feeling of dread, exactly, nor of fear. Just a strange feeling of unease, much like that which comes to people on their first voyage, when a ship is rolling slightly under their

feet, and everything, until they get their sea-legs, seems strangely out of focus. That doesn't explain it, I know; but it is as near as I can put my feeling into words.

I knew, when the sun went down ahead of us, with the hundred and eightieth meridian less than twenty-four hours ahead, that we were on the eve of strange, momentous happenings. To add to my feeling of unease, and as though it had been all planned out by some invisible *something* or *somebody*, in the vague beginning, the officer who should have had the watch that night fell suddenly ill, and I was called upon to take his place. I knew, as I donned my belt, holster and pistol, that I but obeyed the will of some invisible prompter—a prompter without a name.

We had seven sentries out at various important places about the ship, and I made the routine inspections before turning in, less than an hour before midnight. When I entered my stateroom and turned on the light, that feeling of unease was more pronounced than it had been at any time previously. I had the feeling, though I had locked my door when I had last quitted my stateroom, that I had entered again immediately *after* someone had left it. Yet that was impossible. I had carried the key in my pocket all the time, and my cabin-boy was not provided with one. There was no way that anyone, or anything, could have entered my stateroom in my absence, save——

Still as though my every move had been ordered by some invisible prompter, my eyes darted to the port-hole beside my bed. It was quite too small for the passage of a human body, and even to think of such a thing were the utmost folly. If anyone had gone out through the port-hole, that one had fallen, or plunged into the sea, for had the port-hole been ever so big, there was absolutely no way one could have left my stateroom by that way and still remained upon the ship—unless that one had gone out and were even now hanging by his hands along the ship's side. So strongly had the feeling of an alien presence obtruded itself upon me that, in spite of knowing myself an utter fool for entertaining any doubt whatsoever, I strode to the port-hole and looked out. There was nothing, of course, save water, now black and forbidding, stretching away to the south, to a horizon that, since night had fallen, seemed to have crept quite close to us to watch our passing.

Still unsatisfied, in spite of arguing with myself, condemning myself for a fool, I deliberately closed the glass which masked the port, took my seat in a chair beside the bunk, facing the round glass—which resembled, to an imagination suddenly fevered, the eye of a huge one-eyed giant—of the port-hole, and began to undress. Mechanically I lifted first one foot and then the other, removing shoes and stockings.

But I kept my eyes upon the closed port-hole—and that feeling of an unseen presence in the room was stronger as the moments fled. My undressing completed, I stood erect to turn out the lights, and paused in the very act, a cry of terror smothered in my throat by a sheer act of will.

For, for the most fleeting of seconds, I had seen a dead-white face outside the glass which covered the port-hole! It was the face of a person who had drowned, I told myself wildly, and the dripping hair wore a coronet of fluttering seaweed. The eyes of this strange outsider stared straight into mine, devoid of expression, totally unwinking, and the lips, which seemed blue as though with icy cold long endured, smiled a thin and ironic smile. It took all the courage I possessed, which is little enough in the face of the unknown,

to hurl myself across the bed, right hand extended toward the heavy screw which held the circular piece of glass in place. In the instant my hand would have touched the glass, the ship rode into the edge of the storm that was to fill the remainder of the night, and the stern of the steamer rose dizzily on the crest of a mighty wave, dragging all the vessel with it—and the face slid slowly out of sight below the port-hole, the bluish lips still smiling ironically!

I admit that I was trembing, that my fingers were unsteady as I fumbled with the screw to unloose the glass. When the port-hole was open once more, and the cold breeze of this latitude came in to fan my fevered face, I thrust my head out of the port and gazed right and left, and up and down, along the curving side of the ship. But there was nothing—save straight ahead, on our port side. And even there, there was nothing but black water, huge mountainous waves, touched with whitecaps at their crests, like flying shrouds, or like lacy streamers created as a fringe for the mantle of night.

I watched several of the waves sweep under the vessel, which rose and fell sluggishly. The waves seemed to be traveling in no certain direction, but broke into a veritable welter of warring forces, roaring as they came together with the roaring of maddened, deep-throated bulls. Valleys with darkness on their floors, mountain-tops touched with snow that shifted eerily in the breeze.

I was about to close the port when, many yards away from the ship, as though born of the womb of old ocean, I heard the bells!

Like the tiny bells which the bell-wether wears to signal the ewes and the lambs, was the tinkling of the bells—like those bells, yet not like them, totally out of place in mid-ocean, and I felt a strange prickling of the scalp as I listened. Hurriedly, driven by a fear I could not have explained then, nor can I now explain, I closed the port-hole again. And whirled about with another scream, which this time came forth from my quivering lips in spite of all I could do to prevent.

Just inside my stateroom door stood my sergeant of the guard, and his lips were trembling more wildly than my own, his eyes protruded horribly, his face was chalk-white, and he was striving with all his power to speak! As I watched his manful struggle, I dreaded for him to speak—for I knew that what he had come to tell me would be something strange and terrible, something hitherto entirely outside my experience.

"Sir," he managed at last, when I stiffly nodded permission for him to speak, "I just made the rounds of the sentries!"

Here the poor fellow stopped, unable to go on, and his knees knocked together audibly.

"Yes, sergeant," I managed to mutter, "you went the usual rounds of the sentries, and then?"

"The sentry who should be on duty on the main deck, forward of the bridge, is missing!"

Of course I knew on the instant that there might be many reasons for the failure of the sergeant of the guard to find the sentry, many logical reasons. The sentry might have quitted his post (a violation of regulations, true) for a quiet cigarette in the lee of a lifeboat; he might have been walking his post in the direction taken by the sergeant, so that the latter had not overtaken him, even with a complete circling of the main deck; he might—oh, there were many logical explanations; but I guessed instinctively that none of these reasons fitted the case. For one thing, the sergeant of the guard was an

old-timer, had spent many years of his life at sea—yet he was frightened half out of his wits, and I knew he held as many decorations for bravery as any other officer or man in the marine corps. There was something terrible, something—if you will—uncanny behind this disappearance of the sentry.

I muttered an oath, more to prod my own flagging courage than for any other reason, and started toward the door, motioning the sergeant to precede me. But he shook his head stubbornly and barred my way. I halted, for it was evident that he had not completed his report.

"You'll maybe think me daft," he said; "but I couldn't let you go out there, sir, without telling you everything. The corporal on watch at the head of the promenade gangway told me a strange story just before I made my rounds. He opened the door leading onto the starboard promenade, for a look at the weather outside, and just as he was about to close it again, the ship lifted on the crest of a huge wave—and out beyond the wave, many yards away from the ship, he heard something which he likened to the tinkling of little bells!"

"Good God!" I exclaimed.

"And," the sergeant continued, "all the time I was looking for the missing sentry, I had the idea there was someone behind me, following me every step of the way; yet when I whirled to look, the deck behind me was empty!"

"And you found no sign of the sentry?" I said stupidly.

The sergeant shook his head.

"Nothing," he said, "except—except—well, sir, you'll maybe think me daft, as I said before; but on the spot where the sentry had stood to wait for me on my last round, I found wet marks on the deck floor—the marks, as near as I could tell with my flashlight, of bare feet!"

Mechanically, as the sergeant spoke, I had been donning my clothes, leaving my shoes, however, unlaced. I felt an icy chill along my spine as the sergeant continued, and I dreaded, as I had never dreaded anything before, to ask him further about those wet footprints on the deck.

"The wet footprints," he went on, and he was talking wildly now, his words tripping over one another, so rapidly were they uttered, as though he wished to finish his report before I could interrupt again, "led away where the sentry should have been standing, straight to the starboard rail! Right at the rail I stooped to examine the prints more closely. They were the footprints of a human being, I was sure, and the marks of the toes were blurred, and very wide, as though whoever—or *whatever*—had made them, had been carrying a burden in his arms!"

"Good God, sergeant!" I said again; "what are you driving at?"

"Just this, sir. There's something terribly wrong with this ship! *Something took that sentry bodily over the side!*"

I believe that putting a name, however meaningless, to what was in my own mind, caused a little of my courage to return, for I did not find it difficult now to bring myself to leave the stateroom. The sergeant almost trod on my heels as I hurried to the main deck, starboard side, where the wind wrapped icy fingers around me, chilling me to the bone on the instant.

As I hurried forward I looked over the side, into the welter of waters—and stopped short!

Behind me the sergeant groaned—hollowly, like a man who has been mortally wounded. For out of the waters, away to starboard, came the sound of tinkling bells! I darted to the rail and leaned far outboard, striving to pierce the gloom. But there was nothing save the watery wastes, mountains and valleys—and

two spots of greenish phosphorescence, far out, like serpent's eyes which watched the passing ship. But when I looked at them closely, straining my eyes, seeking the form below the eyes, the twin balls of eery flame vanished, a wall of water obtruding itself between!

WELL, we found the sentry, sprawled on his face, where the sergeant should have found him on his rounds. I turned the body over, and it was quite cold—with excellent reason! The corpse was dripping wet, entirely nude, and the lips and cheeks as coldly blue as though the corpse had been dragged for hours on a line in the wake of the ship!

No matter how secluded one's life may have been, no matter how carefully one may have been guarded during one's lifetime, there come into the lives of most of us certain inexplicable happenings which may never be forgotten. This matter of the dead sentry was one of these for me, and I shall go to my grave with the memory of his cold cheeks and bluish lips limned upon the retina of my very soul. So many strange circumstances—thank God that, at the moment, I could not look into the two hours or more of terror which even then stretched before me, else I should most surely have gone entirely mad!—were there connected with this matter that, taken altogether, it is little wonder that I have been unable to forget, or ever shall forget. The roaring of the wind which was lashing all the ocean into fury, a maelstrom in midocean, ghostly whitecaps stretching away into darkness, into seeming infinity; the frightened sergeant behind me, his teeth chattering with fear; the dead sentry at my feet, his body blue with cold, entirely nude as I have said; the marks on the deck of huge bare feet, wet as though the feet had come up out of the sea; the eery sound of bells between our vessel and the lowering horizon—and that dead-white face which I had seen beyond the port-hole of my own cabin a half-hour before.

What was the explanation of it all? What was the cause of the bells, if bells there were? What had come up out of the sea to stride barefooted across the promenade deck of the slumbering troopship? Had my sentry seen whatever had come for him before he had been taken?

Add to all these circumstances the fact that all hell was loose in the watery wastes, that it was now after midnight, and you will understand a little of my feelings. Never before or since have I been as frightened as I was then. I don't regard myself as a coward, nor am I ordinarily superstitious; but show me the man who is without fear in the presence of the unknown, the utterly uncanny, and I will show you a man who has no soul.

I whirled, bumping into the sergeant, who manfully muffled a scream at my unexpected movement, and started, almost blindly, toward the stern of the troopship. As I strode along, with the sergeant at my heels once more, strange images fled across my mind. I remembered the tale of *Die Lorelei*, the maiden who lured sailors to their death with her eery singing, and strained my eyes through the gloom, seeking shapes I feared to see. Then my mind went farther back, to the years before I could read, years in which, thirsty for knowledge, I studied pictures out of old histories to satisfy my longings for wisdom. One of these pictures came back to my mind as I hurried aft: a picture of a hideous monster of unbelievable proportions, who had come up from behind the ocean's horizon, blotting out the sunlight, long arms extended into the picture's foreground, the right hand holding

aloft a medieval sailing vessel which had been lifted bodily from the ocean. A fantastic picture, I knew now, drawn to prove the existence of terrible monsters beyond the horizon to which, as yet, no caravel or galleon had dared travel. I wondered, as I strode aft, why this old picture should return to my mind at this time, and fear was at my throat again as I walked.

"I am coming, oh, my beloved!"

The words, high-pitched with ecstasy, came from straight ahead of me, and out of the heavy shadow cast by a huge funnel stepped one of my sentries. Just for a second, as he strode toward the starboard rail, I could see his face—and the face was transfigured, as though the man gazed into the very soul of the Perfect Sweetheart somewhere beyond the rail. Slowly, step by step, as though he would prolong the joy of anticipation, the sentry, who had hurled his rifle aside, approached the rail, still with his eyes fixed on the welter of waters overside, while I halted spellbound to watch what he would do. From out of the waters there came once more the tinkling of bells! And with the sound, as though the sound had been a signal, a huge shadow detached itself from the shadow whence the sentry had stepped but a moment ago, and loomed high above the luckless youth. At the same time the ship climbed high upon a monster wave, so that her starboard side went down, down, until white water came over the side—and when she straightened again, shuddering through all of her, the sentry had vanished! From well rearward of where the man had disappeared, from out of the smother of waters, there came a single long-drawn cry—and it was not a cry of terror, not a cry of pain, but a scream of ecstasy!

"He's gone, sergeant," I said stupidly, "but what took him? Not the wave: he had but to seize the rail to save himself."

"Did you see the shadow, Lieutenant?" the sergeant replied.

I did not answer. He *knew* I had seen it.

We strode on again, heading toward the stern of the ship—and all about us now, over the ship, on either side of her—but never on her—there tinkled the eery, unexplainable bells!

We stood at last in the very stern of the troopship, gazing into the ghostly wake far below our coign of vantage, and with certain care, I followed the wake rearward with my eyes. But one could not follow it far! That was the circumstance which impressed itself upon me almost at once. The wake died away, short off, within less than a dozen yards of the ship's stern—as though, at the very moment of birth, it had been ignominiously smothered!

In a trice I understood the reason, and thought I understood many things besides. For, like a monster raft, stretching away rearward as far as I could see, and into the darkness beyond my vision to right and left, there followed us, close to, an undulating mass of odorless seaweed! Acres and acres of it there were, rising and falling sluggishly, but keeping pace with the troopship through the night and the storm! Came again that sound of bells, and my hair stiffened at the base of my skull when I saw, watching the seaweed, the result of the tinkling of the bells. The seaweed, when the bells sounded, seemed imbued suddenly with life that was utterly and completely rampant. Long tendrils of the stuff drew away to right and left below us, as though endowed with will of their own, and these tendrils, countless thousands of them, collided with other tendrils in the mass, and slithered over them so that all the mass of the seaweed writhed as though in torment, re-

sembling countless hordes of serpents gathered together from all the evil places of the earth—and where the tendrils had drawn aside I could see black water in the rift as though the tendrils had drawn aside so that I *might* see. Some terrible fascination held me, my eyes fixed on that space of black water, for several moments after the tendrils of seaweed had drawn away to right and left—and up from the depths, into the opening, came two who filled all my being with abject terror—and something else.

One of the two was dead, I knew on the instant, for I could see his face, all white and drawn, yet with the blue lips smiling, of the ill-fated sentry who had gone over the side before my very eyes! And he had been brought up from the depths in the arms of—I hesitate to give the creature a name. A woman? I scarcely know; yet this I do know: in the instant I looked into her eyes, raised to mine for a full minute, I understood the ecstasy which I had read in the face of the sentry whom she now held in her arms. Her breasts, nude and unashamed, were the breasts of a buxom woman, her lips as red as full-blown roses, her hair as black as the wings of a crow, a mantle of loveliness all about her wondrous body, whipping this way and that in the storm.

Her eyes swerved away from mine, and one arm, shapely and snowy, raised aloft from the water—and to my ears came again the sound of tinkling bells! Once more the seaweed writhed and twisted, pressed forward about the ship; but a single mass of it detached itself from the larger mass, pressed close to the—should I call her "woman"—and swerved away again; and the arms of the beautiful creature were empty. Instinctively I whirled about, knowing somehow that I must move my head before I met this creature's eyes again, and stared forward to the shadowy portion of the promenade whence the sentry had emerged before his plunge over the side. Up the starboard side of the ship crept a veritable wall of seaweed; up to the rail, pausing there for a moment, then to the deck, where it writhed for a moment or two, taking a weird distorted shape that made me think of a man, yet which I knew was not a man, before it strode into the center of the promenade. From out of the heart of this monstrosity there dropped soggily a white, cold figure! The second sentry had returned, as the first had done!

Why? Why? Why? What did all this unbelievable terror mean?

I knew, as I searched through all my experience, seeking the key to this uncanny enigma, that we were heading westward outside the usually traveled sea-lanes; that ships seldom, if ever, came this way; that in seven days we had seen not one vessel, nor even the smoke of one upon the horizon. Why did not vessels come this way?

But I could not answer my many questions. I could only ask them, and hope within me that they be not answered, ever. Nauseated by the return of the dead sentry, nude as the first had been, I closed my eyes for a moment, and when I opened them again, there was no seaweed, no monstrous shape, upon the promenade; but even from where I stood I could see the wet footprints—and wondered whom next the creature of the deep would claim from aboard our ill-fated vessel.

RESOLUTELY I drew my pistol and returned once more toward the stern of the vessel. This creature of the depths, whatever it was, had taken life—twice. Whatever it was, it was mortal, and whatever is mortal a bullet will slay. But, in the very act of whirling, I stopped short—for be-

tween me and the stern of the vessel, smiling dreamily, water rippling over her nude and glorious body to splash upon the deck, stood the creature who had come up from the depths in the wake of the ship, bearing the dead man in her arms! My arm fell to my side, my weapon clattered to the deck, and as I moved forward once more, slowly, a step at a time as the sentry had done, the wondrous creature held out her dripping arms, and my eyes drank in all the glorious wonder of her—from head to—*but she had no feet!*

Where the feet should have been, and the legs, there were neither legs nor feet; but a scaly column, wet and dripping, like a serpent with a woman's body; I screamed in terror and unbelief; but it was too late, and her arms were about me, preventing all escape! But, with the touch of those arms, I did not wish to struggle. I knew what had happened to the two sentries; knew the same was in prospect for me; yet at the moment there seemed nothing in all the world more worth-while than to slip over the side, into the depths, with the arms of this wondrous creature about me.

"Lieutenant! Lieutenant! For the love of God what is happening to you?"

It was the voice of the sergeant of the guard, freighted with abysmal terror; but I did not care. The shapely, strangely warm arms of the sea-creature were about me, and the sound of the bells, unbelievably sweet now, was in my ears. For me the world had ceased to exist, save for knowledge that these two things were true. I was carried to the rail, and went over slowly, without commotion, as comfortably as though I had been riding on a couch of eiderdown—and came to myself to know myself lost indeed!

I was deep down, whirling over and over behind the whirling screws of the ship, holding my breath until my lungs were nigh to bursting, swimming with all my might, striving to reach the surface, and life-giving air, when I hadn't the slightest idea which way was upward. With all my power I fought toward the surface; but my progress was slow and dragging, for there was a weight about my knees, as though arms were clasped about them, striving to hold me down. A wordless voice was in my ears—begging, beseeching, and there was something in the voice which made my struggles seem foolish and unnecessary, so that I desired never to reach the air I needed. I closed my eyes, which I had opened instinctively upon striking the water, and two lips pressed firmly against my own—and those lips saved my life, and my reason; for they were the cold lips of a corpse, with neither love nor challenge in them. I flailed out once more, and my hand caught in the line which the steamer dragged over her stern to measure the knots she traveled. All about me as I was hurled forward, now under water, now with nostrils out for a brief breathing space, the mass of seaweed rose and fell on the heavy seas.

God knows how I ever got back aboard the troopship; but I awoke at mess-call in the morning, and sent immediately for the sergeant of the guard.

"What happened after I came back aboard last night, sergeant?" I asked abruptly.

The sergeant of the guard stared at me as though he thought me insane.

"I don't understand you," he managed finally.

"Have we finally passed through the area of seaweed?"

"Seaweed? Is the lieutenant making sport of me? We're two thousand miles from any land, save the ocean bottom, and there ain't any

seaweed anywhere! I don't understand you!"

"Let it pass," I said. "When did you last visit the sentries last night?"

"Just before midnight, sir."

"And were all of them at their post of duty?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what about the bells?"

Again the sergeant's puzzlement was so genuine that I knew he did not understand my meaning. How much of my experience had been real, how much fantasy? I tried another tack.

"Did you make a round of the sentries after midnight?"

The sergeant shook his head sheepishly—it is one of the rules of guard duty that one visit to all sentries must take place between midnight and morning.

"Then the guard hasn't been mustered this morning? Is everyone present? You don't know? Then go at once and find out!"

Ten minutes later the sergeant returned, chalk-white of face, to report that two of the guard were missing, and could not be found anywhere aboard. He told me their names—and instantly my mind went back to the night of uncanny happenings just past, and the two nude bodies brought back from the deep in the arms of—whom? Or what?

I never knew, and to this day the questions I have propounded have never been answered.

But this I know: there are strange things, and sounds, in the sea near the hundred and eightieth meridian, a thousand miles north of Honolulu—and this is the strangest incident in my night of terror: the clothing which I donned next morning was entirely dry; but my hair was stiff with salt water, and there was the tang of sea-weed in my room when I awoke!

I looked, too, at the glass which covered the port-hole beside my bed——

Outside that glass were the smudged prints of thin lips, the blur above them which told of a face pressed against the glass from outside—as though somebody, or *something,* had tried to peer in, between nightfall and morning!

And the bells? I still can hear them, in memory, when sometimes I waken at sea after midnight, and the rolling and the plunging of the ship tell me that a storm is making.

Folks Used to Believe

by ALVIN F. HARLOW

The Dragon and his Kinsmen

FOR 2,000 years and more no fabulous animal was more universally accepted as really existing than the dragon in its various forms. The dragon which St. George, an early Christian hero, slew, was of the usual type—a thick, scaly body somewhat resembling a lizard's, bat-like wings, four legs with clawed feet like an eagle's, the body tapering into a tail which, like the tongue, had a sting in the end of it.

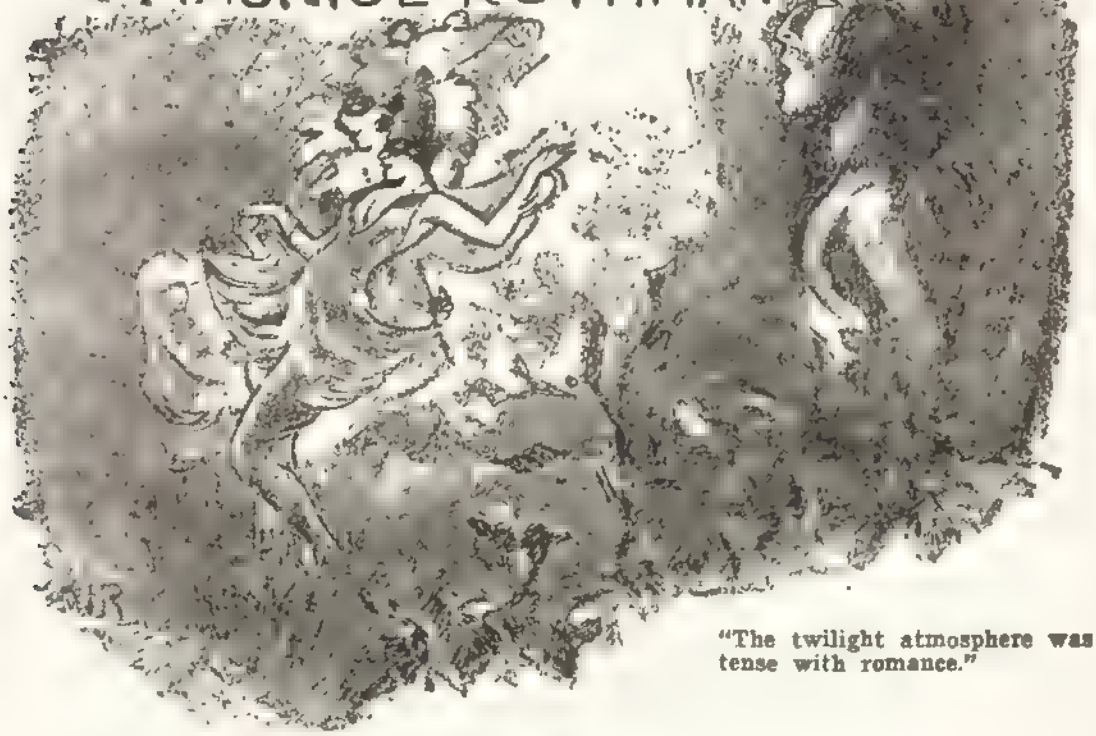
Even after 1700, a nature writer, though admitting that some doubted the existence of the dragon, said that there were "in Arabia Serpents called Sirenæ, which have Wings; being very swift, running or flying, at Pleasure; and when they wound a Man, he dieth instantly. These are supposed to be a kind of Dragons. . . . Dragons are also said to be bred in India and Africa; those of India are much the largest, being of incredible Length; and of these there are two Kinds, one living in the Marshes, which are slow of Pace and without Combs on their Heads; the other in the Mountains, which are bigger and have Combs. Some are of a yellow, fiery Colour; having sharp Backs, like Saws. These also have Beards. When they set up their Scales, they shine like Silver. The Apples of their Eyes are (as it is said) precious Stones, and as bright as Fire, in which, it is affirmed, there is great Virtue against many Diseases. Their Aspect is very fierce and terrible . . . Some do affirm that the Dragon is a black Colour; the Belly somewhat green and very beautiful; that it has a triple Row of Teeth in each Jaw, and very bright, shining Eyes; that it has also two Dewlaps under the Chin, which hang down, of a red Colour."

Pliny, the old Roman writer, tells of how dragons in India concealed themselves in trees and sprang down on elephants, fixing their teeth in the elephant's neck and sucking its blood. The elephant's blood, Pliny declared, is very cold, and was therefore much sought by the dragon in hot weather. One dragon could drink all the blood in an elephant's body, but was made so stupid by it that when the elephant finally fell from weakness, the dragon was frequently crushed beneath its body.

Closely akin to the dragon was the griffin, whose head, shoulders, wings and forefeet resembled an eagle's, while the body, hind legs and tail were a lion's. Griffins were the monsters who guarded the deposits of gold in the mountains of Scythia in ancient times. The wyvern had a body and feet (only two) somewhat like an eagle's, save with scales instead of feathers, bat wings, and the head and tail of a dragon. The hippogriff had four legs; the forepart and wings were those of a griffin, the rear half of the body was that of a horse. A famous magician named Atlantes did his traveling on the back of a hippogriff.

"The DREAM"

by MAURICE ROTHMAN



"The twilight atmosphere was tense with romance."

HE WAS a mild-mannered, self-conscious young man. He talked in a steady, low-pitched voice, as one who is inordinately anxious to be understood. As he talked, his body moved and twitched nervously. Quite unconsciously he shifted his weight frequently from one foot to the other; and with more frequency a mellow pink glow suffused his face and neck. He was dressed shabbily and wore glasses.

"You see," he said, "I am quite perplexed. I am not sure whether I am at this moment in the world of reality, or whether I am talking to you in a dream. There is a half-chance that I am dreaming, and if I am, it will be impossible for you to carry my story further, so I can afford to be more expository.

"I live in a white stone mansion just this side of Morristown: it is on the highway, and lies a quarter of a mile east of Morristown, on the north side of the road. There is a yellow, corrugated brick wall that runs for about three hundred yards facing the road. The wall is about seven feet high and effectually isolates the estate from the road. On the top of the wall runs a short cast-iron grille about a foot high with nude, winged maidens pinioned on black fleurs-de-lis every six feet or so. At first I thought their exposed, rounded breasts vulgar taste, but they are small figures and quite eight feet above the ground, so not easily observed from the road.

"I have been away from home a long time. Mother and Kate are prob-

ably worrying sick over my absence. It may sound queer, but for the life of me I can not find the yellow brick wall with the nude iron maidens. Oh, I have been to every police precinct, but they smile as they assure me that they are searching—then they lead me to the door.

"At present I live in a dark, stuffy flat on Broome Street. Mother and Kate are there, too.

"Oh, do not be alarmed. Please listen to me: I am sure I shall make myself clear. You see, either the house on Broome Street is a dream and I am dreaming now, or the estate near Morristown is a dream and my present status is reality. I am quite confused. This afternoon I shall go again to hunt for the yellow corrugated brick wall with the cast-iron grille. . . .

"You see, I have always been what is generally known as a day-dreamer. After one of my daily trips to the *News* office I was walking slowly homeward. I walked slowly because the atmosphere at home was not an inducement to increase my speed, and because by walking slowly and looking downward I could lose myself facilely in the current dream. I could go home with a clear conscience because the *News* had contained nothing suitable. I squelched a light qualm about the position as bookkeeper at Reid's because I was quite certain that the young men on wheels would be there long before I could walk there. I had no carfare.

"As I said, I was walking slowly, looking downward. The mental vista that presented itself caused a pleasurable flutter about the heart. Dressed in the trappings of a general, I was seated on a white horse. From my perch on the hill-top, I could see the drilling thousands. My subordinates snapped sharp commands that were mechanically obeyed. A multitude of civilians watched in silent awe. The city officials stood on each side of me and felt important because of the juxtaposition.

"About face! Forr-rrd march! Charge!

"It was an awe-inspiring spectacle, the steel glistening and scintillating in the noonday sun. The 'Baby General's' soldiers were the best trained and most loyal in the world. I was whelmed with pride and importance. I was quite young, hence the appellation 'Baby General.'

"I was beginning to feel annoyed with myself. The scene on the hillside began to stale. Let me see, it began with the World War in the daily papers back in 1917. There was a probability of my going. Engendered in the World War, the dream was woven, ramified and exploited until I arrived at the crux, the scene on the hillside. I felt thwarted, frustrated. Nights I would toss about in bed searching for a possibility of continuity. It was futile. The scene on the hillside confronted me. I felt smug on my white charger. The multitude offered their meed. . . .

"You must bear in mind that the 'Baby General' dream continued for about six months—the first three months being creative. Toward the end of the period I was searching frantically for a new dream. In the meantime I held tenaciously to the scene on the hillside, or, as is more probable, it held me.

"It is a cruel axiom that with poverty the baser instincts rise to the surface. If I am not dreaming at present, then I must admit that I can not feel anything more for my mother than the prescribed solicitude of a son. After I have searched the highway near Morristown for the yellow face-brick wall with cast-iron grille bearing the nude maidens, I shall return to my flat on Broome Street to face a tirade that has assumed the character of the perennial murmur of a brook. Now when I pass a brook, its chronic ranting maddens

me. My mother, I am forced to admit, does not present an esthetic appearance. Her face is florid and patchy, and it rests squarely (with no vestige of a neck) on a short, squat body.

" 'And you—you call yourself the man of the family! Your poor sister Kate standing for insults from old Mr. Brabin so she could keep her job—bringing in a measly sixteen dollars a week with which I am expected to run a household! You're a jelly-fish, nincompoop, lazy ne'er-do-well! I suppose it would give you great pleasure to see me go out to scrub floors to feed your moon-calf body. Wake up, fool! Oh! if your father were alive now! Oh! if——'

"My sister Kate would come in, throw a dull look at me and flop into a chair by the table.

"Tonight, after supper, I shall leave the inimical atmosphere of the stuffy, greasy kitchen, throw myself on the folding-bed in the parlor (it is seldom folded) and lose myself in thoughts of Ruthie. Ruthie has become too real to be called a dream character. I must tell you about Ruthie. She is a slim, lovely creature who has plighted her troth to me so often that I'm beginning to worry about its repetition. Ruthie has deep brown eyes and a mass of brown curly hair. She is always dressed in white fluffy things that seem to attest her purity. We love each other in a pure and noble way. In fact our love is the epitome of true love for all time. There is a crux to the Ruthie dream also, but I am working assiduously at ramification. I am beset with a horrible fear that I can not ramify it in any way. I can not remember under what circumstances I became acquainted with my beloved. As I throw myself on the folding-bed, the scene that I shall conjure will be of Ruthie and myself parting. I am leaving to go to war. I feel self-conscious because of the scene Ruthie is creating at the railroad station. But the feeling at my heart is too golden and beautiful to be likened to anything on this earth.

"I don't want you to become impatient. I shall come to the purpose of my story very shortly.

"I went about writing Ruthie on every occasion that presented itself. In dust, in earth, in snow, on paper.

"Perhaps you can suggest a way to prolong the Ruthie dream. Good God! I am afraid I have arrived at the end of the tether. The scene at the railroad station is becoming tiresome. You can picture the scene on the station platform. It is midafternoon of a sunny day. The soldiers have all boarded the train; the train has begun to move. Ruthie's beautiful eyes are tear-filled as she holds tenaciously to my arm. I drag her with me as I move toward the train.

"I assure you I would never tell you this if I were certain you are real. You appreciate the nature of my position? You must understand the character of my day-dream before you could understand the dilemma that I am confronted with. I do not know whether I am dreaming now and my stay in Morristown was real, or whether this is real and my home in Morristown was a dream.

"You see, Ruthie does not possess what is generally conceived as feminine beauty. No, she is not beautiful like the calm of silver moonlight irradiating an expansive lake; she is not beautiful like the evening sun in a color riot over the ocean; she is not exotically beautiful like a ponderous yellow moon cooling the scorched Arabian desert sands. Ruthie is pretty and fluttery and ingenuous. Her beauty is like the silver tinkle of little bells—like the perennial drip-drop of a fountain in a garden on a clear, moonlit night. She is not glorious and riotous like the sun, or mellow and serene like the moon, but rather like a tiny, scintillating

twinkling star—the queen of the stars. . . .

* * * * *

When I came to my senses I lay a long time staring at the window. The cream curtains stirred listlessly under the gentle pressure of the garden-scented breeze. The evanescent odor of garden flowers pervaded the room. Through the curtains I could see diaphanous white wisps of clouds forming exotic patterns in the blue sky. As I turned my head to study my room, I felt a sharp pain at the back of my head. My mind was too busy with other thoughts to dwell long on that pain. I noticed, for one thing, that the rectangular mahogany table with the Chinese joss bookends on it was familiar. The rich carpet was decorated with nondescript floral patterns: the carpet was familiar—every object in the room was familiar. A quiescent, soothing thought pervaded my being: this was my room—my home. I entrenched my body deeper into the softness of the white bedclothes, and drew the silken cover over my chin. I sank my body deep into the cool fragrance—and purred.

"Have you ever watched a cat purr when you stroked it gently along the spine? I had often wondered if a human could feel the spontaneous beatitude a cat feels when it purrs. Well, when I became sensible that my slummy home on Broome Street was a horrible nightmare—and I would never again see my mother blowsy and dirty—that my sister Kate was in reality prim, neat and vivacious; that, in short, this luxury and beauty was reality, the nerves in my body tinglingly purred.

"The nightmare seemed to have endured for long ages—the misery of existence under impoverished conditions had seeped into my body as water is drawn into a sponge. I had been bloated with wretchedness. Now the sponge felt supple and clean. I let my body relax. I could feel my body purring and gurgling as under the gentle strokes of some soothing influence.

"I should have known better than to take the dream seriously. The thought of my unfilial attitude toward my mother nettled me. That there should have been such lack of sympathy between us even in a dream was annoying.

"I sensed a presence in my room, and turned to look. A clean, glorified Kate—my own sister Kate—was observing me solicitously. She moved silently over to me, and stooped to stroke my hair. A faint, evanescent odor of perfume emanated from her. Her dress came open at the bosom, revealing soft, pink flesh. I noted that she was beautiful—large blue eyes, well-formed features, small soft nose with sensitive, quivering nostrils. Strange, but I felt contrite for mistreating her in a dream. I took her hand in mine and squeezed it.

" 'Feel better now, Danny boy?'

"It seemed ages since I had heard her say anything sympathetic to me. I felt moved almost to tears.

" 'It was a nasty accident,' my sister continued, 'but it is not serious. You will be out of bed by tomorrow. We had Dr. Briggs.'

" 'I must confess,' I managed to say, 'but I don't know what happened to me. Enlighten me, Katie dear.' I held her hand tightly.

" 'Oh,' she said, 'Rankin misjudged the distance between a car coming our way and a tree. You went kerplop clear out of the car. There was a slight cut under your left ear—that's all. You're all right, Danny boy.' "

" 'We were in the Locomobile?'

" 'Yes, of course, didn't you remember that?'

" 'Our Locomobile is a light tan?' I persisted.

"'Certainly, foolish boy, you should know that by this time. We've had it almost a year. Rankin looked so utterly dejected, Mother kept him.'

"I shut my eyes, letting my body seep in a feeling of wondrous content. I felt my chin quiver and my eyes fill. When I opened my eyes I saw Kate observing me quizzically.

"'Tell me, Danny——"

"'What?' I wondered if I should.

"'Tell me everything, Danny boy. You've had a bad dream. Tell me all about it.'

"'Well——' I fell silent.

"I held her left hand tightly. With her right hand she soothed my forehead with slow, methodical strokes.

"'Tell me everything, Danny boy,' she persisted.

"'Well, here goes,' I said. 'Don't let it shock you too much.

"'I dreamed that we lived in a miserable, slummy flat in Newark. It was very realistic and caused me a great deal of pain. Mother was blowsy and naggy. You bristled with silent antipathy. Our impoverished condition evolved an atmosphere of dull, chronic antagonism. In the perennial struggle for existence, I felt unfit and misplaced. I tried, Katie, I tried. Early mornings I made the rounds of factories, and waited with other dull-eyed applicants for the employment manager. They always seemed to pass me by. By 1 o'clock I was sitting with the crowd at the *News* office—and oh, Kate, there was a sodden joy, when after a few futile attempts at job-hunting, I found myself walking slowly away from the downtown district—free to dream for the rest of the day. I fabricated beautiful visions of dream-texture.

"'I came home to Broome Street one day, my mind aglow with a dazzling inspiration. The steps and halls were filthy with dust and spittle—and the bare boards creaked and sagged under my weight. On the third floor I pushed the door of our flat open. Mother was wiping her coarse red hands on her apron. You were lying on the kitchen lounge, sobbing. The scene was not unfamiliar, so I rushed, unheeding, into the parlor, found paper and pencil, and began to write. I wrote hurriedly, feverishly, with no thought of the commercial value of my fantasy.

"'Wearing sandals and loin-cloth, I was running with long, joyous strides along a forest trail. Perhaps I was an Indian runner. I felt lithe and carefree. Twigs and dried leaves rustled and snapped under my feet. Stooping to avoid overhanging branches, brushing insects from my face, I ran. The twilight atmosphere was heavy and tense with romance. I drank deeply of the wine-scented air. In a clearing two figures were dancing. Perhaps they were Pierrot and Pierrette. The air hung motionless, perfumed and tense. I found myself merged into the dance. Ruthie was in my arms, lissome, soft and smiling. We were the only two in the clearing. Perhaps *we* were Pierrot and Pierrette. We moved in wild fantastic swings. Neither of us had spoken. A big round moon came out to bathe us in a silvery glow.

"'Then a voice from the kitchen, harsh and sibilant, cut into my consciousness:

"'"Mother, I tell you I won't stand it much longer. Brabin grabbed me around the waist and kissed me. The touch of his horrid lips on mine was unbearable. I'm going to quit. I'll find another job——"

"'"Gawd, and what'll we do in the meantime? Tomorrow's the first—Gawd, we'll be put out——"

"'Oh, Katie, it was horrible, horrible——'

"Silently, Kate continued to soothe my forehead with steady, soft strokes.

"Suddenly I sat up, a-quiver with determination.

" 'Kate, tell Rankin to get the car —the Locomobile—I'm all right. The only thing that's the matter with me is the dream. I can't shake it off. It may seem queer, but I want to go to Broome Street. Perhaps the old house is there: if it is, I'll know it.'

" 'To what purpose—this trip?'

" 'To cement me to my present mode of living. The dream took hold of me in an eery way: I can't shake it off, I tell you.'

" 'Very well,' Kate assented. 'Perhaps it is best.'

"KATE left me alone. I became sensible again of the throbbing pain behind my left ear. I pondered on the route we would follow after we got to Newark. We must find Kinney Street—then left on Broome to Court Street. Yes, I would know it. What a wild adventure—searching for a house I had dreamed about!

"My thoughts were interrupted by my mother hurrying to my bed.

" 'Poor Danny!' she gasped out of breath. 'Kate just told me.'

"She was stout, but it added to her dignity. She carried her weight gracefully and withal made a charming and prepossessing matronly appearance.

"No, I would not be diverted. My mind was made up. Yes, she could come along—and Kate too. We could be back for dinner. It was final.

"It required some effort to dress. My clothes, patently of a fine texture, looked strangely unfamiliar. My mental equilibrium seemed to be turned slightly askew by the dream—drat the dream!

"By and by we were rolling noiselessly along the drive. The lawn shimmered rich green in the afternoon sun.

"Arrived at the gate house, we waited for Hare to open the massive doors. The yellow brick wall appeared formidable. Old Hare came hurrying rheumatically.

" 'And how is Mister Daniel?' he asked deferentially, as we rolled out.

"I chafed as we sped along the countryside. Mother and Kate were obviously humoring me. We reached Newark, and Rankin found it necessary to shift gears frequently in the traffic. He often turned his head at an inquiring angle.

" 'Yes, straight ahead, Rankin.'

"I sat tensely erect, my emotions screwed to a high pitch. My heart beat clamorously.

" 'Now, to your left, Rankin. This is Broome Street. Why, everything is quite familiar!—that drug-store—that tenement—the next corner—now stop—stop—this is the house—this is it! I'm sure of it.'

"People collected, evidently attracted by the expensive make of car.

"In my excitement, I sprang up, pointing over the collected heads. 'This is the house, Kate—Mother!'

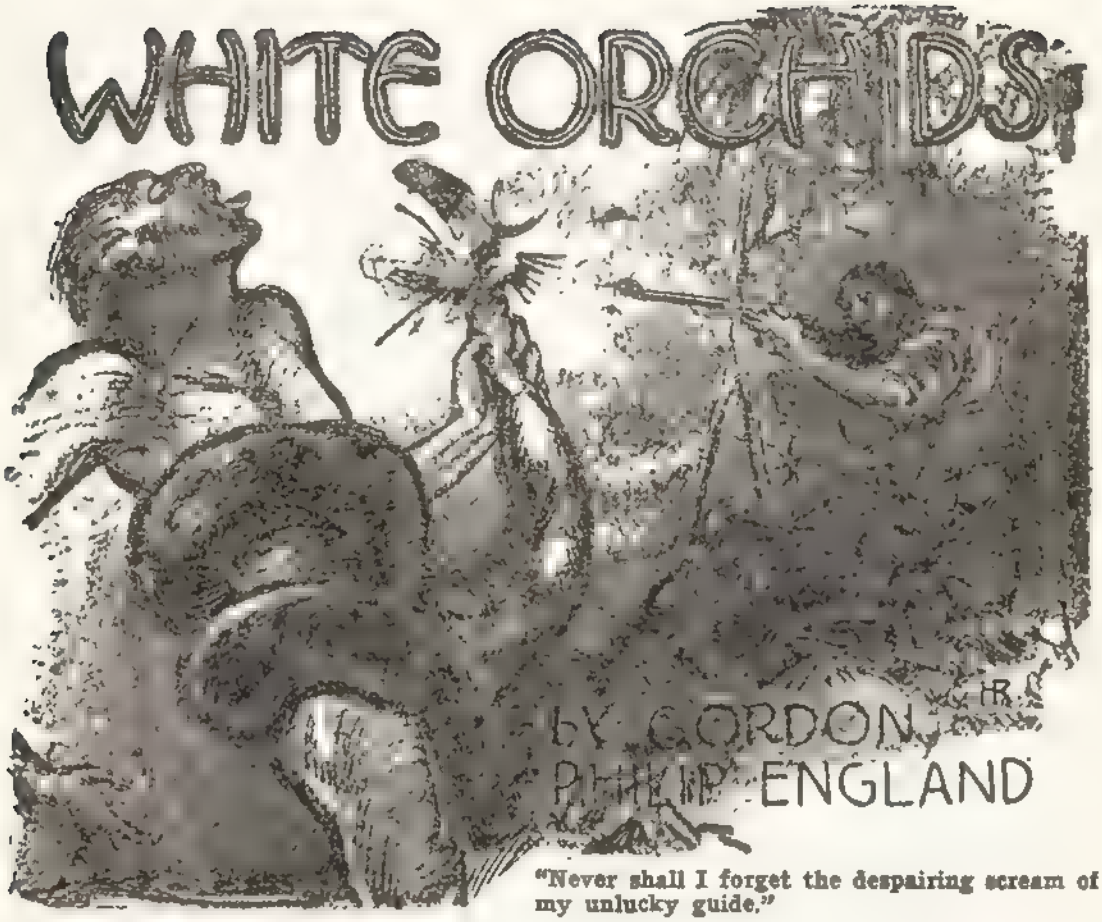
"Then the devil got into the crowd and they began to laugh. They pointed horny fingers at me; and laughed. They leered. Some colored boys started to jig, pointing at me and laughing at the same time. I felt sick and foolish. I turned to Mother and Kate. Good God! they were laughing! Mother, Kate and Rankin —pointing fingers at me—laughing.

"You see, something strange must have occurred. Now, I am looking for the white stone mansion with the yellow brick wall. On top of the wall runs a short cast-iron grille about a foot high with nude winged maidens pinioned on black fleurs-de-lis every six feet or so. I am sure I shall find it. Mother and Kate are worrying over my absence.

"Perhaps you think I have never lived in a white stone mansion. Oh! I can prove it—I can prove it! I can show you the scar behind my left ear.

"Look—look closely. I am a little confused: perhaps it is behind the right ear. Do you see it?"

WHITE ORCHIDS



"Never shall I forget the despairing scream of my unlucky guide."

MEN call me mad. They have labeled me a maniac and shut me away in this grim asylum. The more I try to convince them of the truth, the more they laugh. Bad I am; a criminal I am; but insane I am not. Now, incarcerated within madhouse walls, I will write my story; and perhaps, after I have gone, they will believe.

It all began last September; now it is June. In a tall maple outside my iron-barred window, robins are singing. To the birds it is summer; nine months ago it was summer in my heart, too. Nine months ago! How long it seems!

Nine months ago, I visited the Western Hospital of that old French-Canadian city, Montreal. And there, on a cot near the door in the fifth public ward, I saw Old Matthewson, the orchid-gatherer. Fever was devouring him, and part of the time he was delirious. But, during lucid moments, he told me his strange story; told me of the marvelous flowers for which I have sold my soul!

I laughed at him at first, I remember; laughed incredulously. Had not I myself for many years collected orchids; searched them out from the farthest corners of the globe? Certainly I had; and critics had pronounced my collection the most excellent of any—better even than that of Jasper Carrington, my most bitter rival.

Old Matthewson saw me laugh; saw my sneer of unbelief. Then with shaking fingers he drew from be-

neath his pillow the map, and pointed out to me the place, far in the interior of Brazil, where the flowers grew. And as his finger touched the rude sketch, his forehead contracted; a look of fear came into his pale blue eyes; and from his burning lips trembled the word, "Danger!" Suddenly he raised himself upon his elbow and stared in horror past me into nothingness. Then, uttering a sharp cry of "White Orchids!" he fell back dead.

As a nurse came hurrying from the other end of the ward, I thrust the paper into my coat pocket. After all, the man was dead, dead as a smelt. Why, then, as he could not use his map, should not I appropriate it? I calmly listened to the anger of the nurse, who accused me of exciting the patient. Then, as she turned again to the body, I walked quickly from the building.

Next morning I returned to my home in New York, taking the map with me. That evening, I spread it before me on a table in my den, and gloated over it. I studied it intently; studied it till every point upon it was firmly fixed within my mind. Finally, putting the chart aside, I sketched it from memory upon another paper; then compared the two. In delight, I found my new map was a counterpart of the original. True, I had left out a few minor details, but all important features were identical.

Placing my own sketch within a book, I folded Matthewson's, and put it in my pocketbook. Then I went down to the Collectors' Club.

Many of the members were there that night, among others, Carrington.

I behaved foolishly that evening. Excited by my discovery, I drank deeply, and became badly intoxicated. During a discussion with Carrington regarding the merits of our collections, I boasted of my new find.

Carrington laughed contemptuously: "You're dreaming, man! Or rather—you're drunk!"

Taking out the map, I waved it dramatically.

"Drunk, am I?" I exclaimed. "There's the map to prove what I've told you! Oh no, you don't!"—as he reached for it—"the secret's mine, mine alone! I'm the only white man who knows where those orchids are!"

Carrington's eyes sparkled with desire, and for a moment he appeared almost ready to assault me. Then, with a muttered oath, he turned away.

Flushed with my triumph, I called loudly for another drink. Then for another, and another.

At an early hour next morning, I staggered to a couch in an inner room, and falling upon it, lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes, I remembered what a fool I had made of myself the night before. I could not recall all the idiotic things I had done, but I could remember enough. Then I thought of my map. I felt for my pocketbook. What a relief when my fingers touched it!

Reassured, I went back to my house, and entering my den, locked the door. I opened the pocketbook. The map was gone!

For several minutes I paced the room, wildly cursing. Though I had no proof, I was certain that Carrington had stolen my chart.

Then I laughed. After all, I still had a reliable map. I crossed to the table and opened the book. Yes, there lay my new map, just as I had left it.

I went to the 'phone, intending to enter a complaint at the club. Then I paused. Such a proceeding would be useless. Most of the members

were good friends of Carrington's, and many were my personal enemies. If I spread the news of my loss, I should gain nothing, and besides, I should make a laughing-stock of myself.

I wished, however, to learn what Carrington was doing. So I rang him up. A servant answered, a new servant who did not recognize my voice. I asked to speak to her master. She told me that Mr. Carrington had left that morning for his house at Jacksonville. No—she didn't know how long he'd be away.

But I had found out enough. I knew why Carrington had gone to Jacksonville. It was there that his powerful biplane was housed.

I made a rapid calculation. Carrington's airplane had been used in a long non-stop flight a few weeks before, and would need a thorough overhauling before it would be fit for service. He could scarcely have it ready before a fortnight.

Then, too, an accident might delay him, nor could he depend upon finding a good landing-place in those South American jungles.

I consulted shipping lists. The fast steamer *Bolivia* was to clear for Para, Brazil, that very afternoon.

I acted immediately. When the *Bolivia* sailed, I was aboard.

LEAVING the steamer at Para, I procured an Indian guide and a swift motor-boat, and started up the Amazon.

From the outset, disaster attended me. When near the place where I intended leaving the boat, we ran against a submerged rock. Being very near land, we managed to save both our lives and part of our supplies, including my rifle and several boxes of cartridges; but the boat sank before we could get out everything. Nearly all of my collecting paraphernalia went to the bottom; all I had left were a few large manila envelopes, such as I used for pressing flowers.

This was bad enough, but worse was to come. On the third day after we had left the river and struck inland, came tragedy. We were pushing our way through dense jungle, when suddenly my young native, who was some distance ahead of me, uttered a despairing shriek. Running forward with rifle in hand, I was horrified to see the poor lad in the embrace of a huge anaconda, anchored by its tail to a small tree. At close range, I discharged the contents of my heavy rifle into the boa's head. It sank to the ground, its coils spasmodically tightened; then it unrolled and, releasing its victim, thrashed about in its death agony.

Knowing I had nothing more to fear from the big snake, I turned my attention to the native. The poor fellow was already nearly dead. That awful hug had crushed his ribs, and driving them against his lungs, had forced the breath from his body. Even as I bent over him, the last spark of life flickered out.

Never shall I forget the despairing scream of my unlucky guide when the sinuous coils caught him, nor the sight of his broken, squeezed body. No! Nor the look of anguish pictured upon his dead face.

I buried my guide where he lay. Then, after consulting my map, I continued my journey.

Ten days later, I knew that if map and compass had not misled me, I must surely be near the place of the orchids. My heart tingling with excitement, I hastened on.

Above me on the tree branches, small green monkeys chattered indignation at my intrusion, while gaudily-feathered parrots shrilled insults.

I scarcely noticed these, so intent were my thoughts upon the flowers.

"Where is Carrington?" I wondered. Perhaps already he had

reached his objective. Perhaps already he had won the rich prize!

Spurred by the unwelcome thought, I quickened my pace.

As I advanced, I saw the forest becoming more open, and felt certain that I was nearing the end of my quest.

Then, suddenly emerging from the shade of the forest into clear sunlight, I gasped in amazement.

No! The map had not lied. There, not more than a hundred yards in front of me, were the orchids—hundreds of them—in full bloom!

And such orchids! In my most fantastic dreams I had never imagined anything so beautiful. They were white, of a spotless tint of whiteness that shamed all other colorings. Petals were white, even the leaves and bodies of the plants were of the same shade. White orchids!

At first, feasting my eyes upon the orchids, I saw nothing more. Then, as my gaze dropped upon something lying on the ground a few yards from the flowers, I sprang involuntarily back. The white, sun-bleached *something* had once been a living man!

Glancing about, my terrified eyes saw other things of a similar nature. In all, scattered about near the orchids, I counted a full score of skeletons—every one a human's.

I now recalled the dark warning that Old Mathewson had uttered just as life was leaving him.

What meant these flesh-bared bones in this lovely flower garden? Look where I might, I could see nothing which appeared dangerous. Yet the skeletons showed that danger threatened.

Then again I looked at the white orchids, and desire gripped me. Momentarily forgetting the grim spectacle of the dead men, I ran with outstretched hands toward the flowers.

As I drew nearer them, I became aware of a sweet, powerful scent. The aroma of it filled my nostrils; the whole atmosphere seemed clouded with the subtle perfume. I was running no longer. Instead, I was drunkenly staggering from side to side. The force of the perfume was overcoming me; my senses were reeling.

Now I realized the meaning of the danger, yet despite this, my desire for the orchids drove me on. Thunder rolled within my brain; my eyes were darkening; breath was leaving me; yet still I stumbled onward.

I had been about three hundred feet from the orchids when I had started; now I was a scant hundred. But my powers of endurance were rapidly diminishing; my very life seemed ebbing from me. And finally I fell headlong.

For some minutes I lay dazed; then with dogged effort again went forward, creeping upon hands and knees.

After covering a few feet in this manner, my limbs refused to function, and I fell again, stretched at full length on the ground, my fast-blinding eyes fixed covetously upon the orchids.

I knew now that I could not reach them. I had crossed little more than two-thirds of the distance, and already was almost lifeless. What then would be the result if I attempted to advance farther?

I hated to go back, but to remain meant death. Yet the perfume so dangerously sweet was luring me on. Every impulse in my body, mind and soul, clamored to me to go onward. But common sense told me to retreat while there was time.

So I commenced my backward journey. Too exhausted to rise, I crawled weakly toward security.

For minutes at a time strength deserted me, and I lay motionless, unable to move a single muscle.

Then my powers would return for a brief period, and again I would resume the fight. My granite-formed will urged me on. Had it not been for that, I must have lain down and let the poisonous breath of the orchids destroy me.

But that strong will saved me, and at length I again reached the edge of the forest. Rolling beneath the cooling shade of a tree, I lay still.

How long I lay there I do not know, but it was doubtless several hours.

Suddenly I heard a sound that I recognized, a sound apart from the jungle noises—the drone of a motor.

I turned my gaze upward. Was I dreaming, I wondered, or was that big, humming thing high above me in the sky really an airplane? Then I remembered Carrington.

Eagerly I watched. The machine was dropping lower; evidently its pilot had seen the flowers. He volplaned down to a perfect landing on the other side of the orchid garden.

The pilot stepped out, and at sight of him my heart thrilled. There could be no mistaking that stalwart figure.

While I looked, Carrington started toward the flowers.

Watching my rival, I could see how I, myself, must have behaved. I smiled grimly as Carrington's stride slackened and his steps became uncertain. And laughed aloud when he began to sway from side to side.

At last, Carrington fell, even as I had done. And again as I had done, he crept forward on all fours.

I now expected to see Carrington overpowered by the heady perfume, and believed he would soon abandon his attempt.

But, after some moments, I saw in mortification that he was evidently stronger than I, and that where I had failed, he might succeed.

Still he held to his course, gradually, inch by inch, cutting down the distance between him and the orchids.

Now, only ten feet separated him from the flowers.

With one last, desperate effort, Carrington flung himself forward. Seizing the nearest orchid-plant, he tore it from the ground. Then he sank unconscious beside the flowers.

I watched, expecting each instant to see him begin his return trip. But he remained motionless, and finally I realized that the scent had completely overpowered him, and if he should lie there many minutes longer, he would surely die. And then I made a decision.

Frantically I looked about, but could see nothing to aid me in my purpose. Then I thought of the airplane, and hurried over to it. In the machine I found what I had hoped for—a coil of rope.

Unrolling it, I saw I had about one hundred and twenty feet of cord.

I set quickly at work, and a few moments later held a serviceable-looking lasso.

Then, drawing a long breath, I stepped into the poison-charged area.

Several times the dreadful perfume almost overcame me, but finally I arrived within about a hundred feet of Carrington.

Whirling the lariat above my head, I cast. Straight and true sped the noose, encircling my rival just below his shoulders. Carefully I drew the rope tighter. With a sigh of relief I felt the slack grow less. I began to walk backward, pulling Carrington after me. Soon both of us were beyond reach of the deadly perfume.

Still Carrington held the white orchid clutched fiercely in his hand. I

took hold of the plant and tried to pull it from him. His clenched fingers were like a vise. Then I used both hands, and putting forth all my strength, bent back the rigid fingers. A moment more, and the wonderful orchid was in my possession. I cried aloud with joy; I gazed upon it in rapture.

At last, carefully laying the flower aside, I again turned to Carrington. My noose was still drawn tight about his body. His eyes were closed; I began to fear that he was already dead. I caught him by the shoulders and shook him roughly. He wriggled weakly in my grasp; his eyes slowly opened. I saw that he recognized me. He opened his mouth; tried to speak; but could not.

I smiled cruelly. I picked up the white orchid and held it above him. At sight of it, passionate desire filled his eyes; he reached for it painfully. I laughed and drew it away; his almost powerless arm dropped back; he groaned.

I laughed again. Bending over him, I said mockingly:

"You want white orchids, Carrington; then you shall have them. I will give them to you—*I will give you to them!*"

Catching hold of the rope, I savagely dragged him toward the flowers. I drew him far within the poison belt; drew him till I felt myself weakening; till my tortured lungs, crying for air, hammered at my ribs. Then I left him.

All this time, Carrington had said nothing, though he fully realized what was happening. That is: his lips had not spoken; but what a curse his cold gray eyes had uttered! They had bored me through and through.

But when I returned to the orchid, any faint qualms of conscience left me. I would have killed another man if need were—aye, a score; a hundred—to obtain the flower. From infancy I had loved flowers; almost worshiped them. But this white orchid—words can not describe it!

I held the flower a long time, in spellbound admiration. I would have liked to take the plant intact to North America, but I knew this would be impossible. Could I have used the airplane, I might have preserved the orchid alive, but unfortunately I had never learned to operate such a machine.

But the flower, even if pressed, would excite the envy of other collectors. In my pocket were the manila envelopes. Taking one out, I carefully broke off a big blossom and placed it inside. I sealed the envelope, then returned it to my pocket. And then, going toward the orchids, I tossed the blossom-raped plant in the direction of my victim.

Going back to the edge of the woods, I picked up my rifle, which I had laid down when attempting to secure the orchids, and after casting one last look at flowers, skeletons, and Carrington, I entered the jungle.

I was now faint with hunger, but the forest teemed with game. An hour later, I killed a peccary, built a fire, and roasted it. Then I heaped on wood and made a big blaze to keep off wild beasts. Completely worn out by the day's excitement, I lay down by the fire and fell asleep.

EARLY in the morning I awoke, and continued my way back toward the river.

The fourth afternoon of my journey back, I felt sharp pains shooting through my head. I staggered on, but rapidly my strength forsook me. Fever had gripped me.

At last, my senses left me. I became delirious; what I did, I know not.

When I came to myself, I found myself in a boat on the Amazon, in the company of a party of American hunters. These told me that they

had found me burning with fever, helpless in the jungle. That they had done everything within their power to aid my recovery, and were now taking me back to civilization.

My first thought was of my orchid. I searched my pocket for the envelope; found it gone. I demanded it; they told me they had seen nothing of it; that when they had found me I had not so much as a rifle or compass with me.

I refused to believe my rescuers; I became violent; I cursed them for a lot of robbers. My excitement raised my temperature; brought on a relapse; again I lost my mind.

Of course, I do not remember what happened then, but have been told that the hunters brought me to Para, where they placed me in the care of an American doctor. He recognized me, and did everything possible for me. Gradually I recovered from the fever, but for a long time my mind was a blank. The doctor took me back to New York, and some weeks later, I regained my memory.

With remembrance there came a strange feeling. I was sorry I had killed Carrington. More than sorry; I hated myself for having done so. Had I still possessed the orchid, perhaps I might not have felt remorseful, but its loss had in a measure softened me, and I realized what an awful thing I had done.

At last the strain became too great to bear. I felt that even death would be preferable to my soul-anguish. So I went to the chief of police and told my story. He only laughed at me; declared that before leaving America, Carrington had told the press he was attempting a non-stop flight across the Atlantic; that his flight had been unsuccessful, and the accepted belief was that he had fallen into the sea.

As for my own tale, the chief considered it utterly absurd. He hinted that I was suffering from hallucinations. I grew angry; a red film danced before my eyes; I struck him in the face.

It was then that they called me mad; then that they gave me a maniac's number, and dragged me to this horrible asylum. Death I would not have minded, but this——!

Since coming here, I have been tormented with awful visions. In my dreams, and often when awake, I have again seen those flowers of hell—and Carrington. I have seen his cursing gray eyes malignantly fixed upon me.

I know that if I remain longer in this lonely, dismal madhouse, I shall indeed become insane. But I will not remain!

This morning, I discovered something. One of the iron bars on my window is loose. Not very loose, but enough so I can pull it out. The maple tree where the birds are singing is quite near the window, and one of the branches is within easy reach. Tonight, when all is still, and the guards are asleep, I will escape. I have friends in the outer world who will hide me. They will give me money and help me to get away to some other country. And perhaps, when I am out in the busy world again, I shall not mind those cursing eyes; shall not behold such visions so often. Tonight, I will escape!

* * * * *

Extract from the report of Charles Warren, superintendent of the asylum:

"Yesterday afternoon, Inmate No. 17 asked for pencil and paper. All the afternoon he wrote, and till nearly dark. This morning, when I entered his room, I found it empty. The pile of paper and pencil lay on the table, but Inmate No. 17 had gone. A brief examination showed that he had wrenched a bar from his window, and crawled through the opening. Going to the window, I looked out. Inmate No. 17 was lying on the ground twenty feet below. A broken branch lying beside him explained what had happened. Going downstairs, I went out and examined the body. Inmate No. 17 was dead. His neck was broken."

A Short, Strange Tale Is

WHEN THE DEAD RETURN

By PERCY B. PRIOR

WITHOUT a doubt it is very disconcerting to meet a dead man, particularly if he chances to have been your husband.

In the circumstance it is no wonder that Marian screamed.

As it was midday and on Broadway, the scream attracted a good deal of attention and, with one exception, everyone in the vicinity rushed toward Marian, who was charming enough to merit the fullest sympathy. The one exception walked quickly round the corner of John Street and vanished. He had a reason for doing this. He was a dead man.

Normally Marian might have thought there had been some mistake regarding her late husband's demise. But this was hardly possible. He had died in bed and in her presence. Furthermore, the medical man, Dr. Henry Delware, who had also been present, could doubtless swear that the dead man had shuffled off his mortal coil.

Marian was twenty-two when she became a widow. It was a year later when she screamed on Broadway, and by that time she was no longer Mrs. Creed, relict of the late Mark Creed.

She had become Mrs. James Turner.

That was one reason why her scream had such a stricken note. It becomes really embarrassing to encounter a dead husband when one has no further use for him.

What made the matter more disconcerting, and argued against the chance of delusion or of the dead man's having a double, was the fact that the newspapers had recently contained a number of circumstantial accounts of dead people having been seen. There was a veritable epidemic of apparitions.

A psychic committee had formed itself to collate and record the evidence and had investigated such incidents as that of Arthur Johnson, age twenty-four, who had died suddenly in a public city park. Some six months later he had been seen by both his mother and sister near their residence, and when they had tried to speak to him he had fled and boarded a street-car post-haste.

Then there was Mrs. Turnley, seen by her son leaving her favorite seat in a well-known New York picture palace. He had tried to trace her in the crowd but had failed. That was four months after her death.

Strangest of all, however, was the case of Felix Malheur, the French chef, who had been fatally stabbed in the neck by Henri Marzot, a malicious deed for which Marzot went to the electric chair.

Some seven months had elapsed when a man, convincingly identified as Malheur, and having a scar on his neck exactly similar to the fatal wound, was arrested for vagrancy. He swore that he was not Malheur,

but would give no particulars of himself. The one point of doubt in this case was the fact that the arrested man had a scar on his chest, whereas no such mark was mentioned in the description of the deceased Malheur.

With these circumstances in mind, it is not surprizing that Marian Turner screamed when she caught sight of her dead first husband, whom she had married when she was but eighteen, and whose doglike devotion she had found irritating rather than otherwise, and whom she had done her best to forget since she had been married to her wonderful James Turner.

The instant she screamed, however, she realized that the position contained embarrassments, so when the passers-by crowded around her she apologized.

"It's all right," she explained, "I'm sorry to be so silly, but I was sure that car was going to run over that little child." And she pointed to the scene of a fictitious narrow escape.

That evening she told her husband of the apparition, and together they consulted Dr. Delware as to possible pre-natal effects of such a shock on a child-to-be. He reassured them, but they were still a little troubled as to the legal status of children if dead first husbands were going to make a practise of returning to life.

It was at the same time that the authorities, in further investigation of the Malheur affair, decided to exhume the murdered man's body. The grave was opened. It contained an empty coffin. Malheur was missing.

This made it look as though Marzot had been executed under false pretenses, though it was admittedly rather late to make amends.

Even after this, the arrested "vagrant" still denied that he was the dead man, and he was released after a short detention. Thereupon he vanished.

Following this exhumation, the undertaking firm of Interments, Inc., which had carried out the last rites on the murdered man, was interviewed by Detective Bowler, who had charge of the case. Mr. Marlow, who seemed to be the whole firm, could offer no explanation.

But it so chanced that this Mr. Marlow was unpopular among the undertaking fraternity. A short while previously he had been struggling along, small, suburban, and almost bankrupt. Then without apparent reason he had burst forth in a blaze of advertisements as Interments, Inc., and had taken a large establishment in the heart of New York. It was then that he became unpopular. He gave cut-rates for funerals, and a facetious competitor even remarked that he would next be introducing a cash-and-carry system to the profession.

This unpopularity led to gossip and it was then noticed that quite a number of the alleged apparitions were of people who had been inanimate patrons of Interments, Inc. That fact, combined with Malheur's empty coffin, furthered the police investigation, and eventually established the fact that not merely several, but every one of the apparitions had been buried by Interments, Inc.

Among other people interviewed by Detective Bowler during these inquiries was Marian Turner, not because there was any suspicion that she had seen her dead husband, but because his funeral had left the mortuary chapel of Interments, Inc., instead of his late residence.

Mrs. Turner stated that she had actually desired the cortege to leave the house, but that Mr. Marlow had been so insistent that in the end she

had agreed to its leaving his premises.

Following this, Detective Bowler consulted the register of companies, and found that Marlow was only a nominal shareholder in the firm, virtually all the shares being in the name of one Henry Delware, medical practitioner. . . .

Before doing anything further, the officer decided to consult his chief, but about 11 o'clock that night a telephone message asked him to call immediately at the residence of Mr. James Turner.

There he heard that Mrs. Turner had seen her first husband, supposed to be dead, as a very substantial apparition in Broadway, a few days previously. Also that a second apparition had occurred scarcely an hour since. Mr. Turner, explaining this, stated that he and his wife had retired about 10 o'clock, but had not switched off the light. It was a sultry evening and although the blinds were drawn one window had been left open. Suddenly Mrs. Turner had screamed and pointed to this window. Her husband, looking quickly round, had seen the blind move. Jumping up, he had rushed outside to see a figure vanish through the side gate, but though he gave chase the figure eluded him.

THE morning papers recorded nothing of this. They had something much more startling:

MYSTERIOUS CRIME

Dr. Delware Murdered

ASSAILANT ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

The details showed that the doctor had received an urgent call toward midnight at his residence, and going down had admitted someone to his surgery. A few minutes later his wife heard a strange voice, loud and angry, and two shots had immediately followed. Running downstairs she found the doctor lying on the floor, dead, and a strange man lying beside him with a terrible wound in his neck. The doctor had been shot through the heart. Detective Bowler, it was stated, had the case in hand.

The evening papers were able to go one better and print verbatim, in cold, official phrases, the dying depositions of the wounded man, who had since succumbed:

My name is Mark Creed. About a year ago I died. That is, I became unconscious, and awoke to find Dr. Delware standing beside an operating-table on which I was securely strapped. He had previously been attending me in my home. He told me I had died and that he had brought me back to life. He made me swear that I would not reveal myself to anyone, not even my wife. He said his experiments must be secret for a while yet. He said he would not let me live unless I promised. I promised.

After that he treated me for about six months in a sanatorium. It took about an hour's ride to get to it. I don't know where it was. The car was closed. When he discharged me from there he made me promise again I would not see my wife. He told me she had married again and that she was now very happy.

A few days ago I saw her on Broadway After that I could not keep my promise. I loitered about the house hoping to see her. Last night I peeped beneath the window-blind. That made me mad. They saw me and a man gave chase. I got away among some trees. I then went to Dr. Delware. I cursed him. I cursed him for bringing me back to such a life of torment. Then I shot him."

The man had died almost immediately after signing this statement. Subsequent investigation at the doctor's surgery seemed to confirm quite clearly that he had been resuscitating the dead, apparently by the hypodermic injection of some unknown drug soon after death, followed by a surgical operation and actual massage of the heart, probably under an electrical impetus.

The reason for his association with Interments, Inc., is plain. He had financed the company and attracted

business by reduced rates in order to get possession of subjects for his experiments, one of the most grisly business associations on record.

The various apparitions were thus explained, and some strange reunions resulted.

But they are not likely to recur. Dr. Delware's astounding secret died with him, and Marian Turner at least will probably agree that it is just as well.

A dead husband is such an embarrassing thing to be at large

A Short Ghost-Story

THE SLEEPERS

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

"THAT story," began the man with the gold spectacles, crossing his legs, "reminds me of an odd incident that befell me just last year."

The other three men moved closer around the fireplace and looked over at him expectantly. The man with the gold spectacles repeated his statement. Unnoticed by them, a thin little man clad in a blue suit with brass buttons slid onto the fifth seat somewhat back in the shadows. The inquisitive flames in the fireplace leaped higher to light up the face of the newcomer, but the effort was too much for them, and they sank back exhausted. The four men did not see him.

"It was last summer. I was at the time in Hollywood working with the director of my latest book, which was being filmed, when my publisher in Chicago wired me to come to him at once. The matter was urgent, he stated. Somewhat testily I wired back that I would come immediately. The train I took was the Midnight Express. When I called for my ticket every Pullman was filled to capacity. Certainly, thought I, I am not going to be cheated out of a night's rest merely because the Pullman cars are all filled to capacity. So I clamored loudly for a Pullman. I was not alone in my demand, for a pompous salesman, who had purchased his ticket after I had procured mine, added his voice to mine. At length another Pullman was added. Had it not been for the hullabaloo the salesman and I raised, the incident I am about to relate would never have happened.

"It being shortly after midnight I wanted to retire. I left the salesman smoking out on the rear platform of our car, and I went into the extra Pullman. My berth was lower seven, and I went directly over to that number and pulled the curtains aside. But I shut them again as quickly as I had opened them. For a man lay in my berth, sleeping peacefully. I was indignant that the officials should cause such an error.

I called for the porter, who came in as fast as his sleeping feet would carry him.

"Said I, when the negro had come abreast of me, 'Sam, there's a man in my berth.'

"He grinned foolishly and pulled the curtains slightly aside. 'Indeed, suh, indeed there is. Very unfortunate, suh, and tha's a fac'.'

" 'Sam,' I answered, 'go and get me the Pullman conductor, and don't you dare to come back without him.'

" 'Indeed I will, suh.'

"After what seemed a wholly unnecessary interval Sam returned with the Pullman conductor. When the conductor stepped into the car, he asked, 'Are you McCarthy?' 'Yes,' said I, 'I'm McCarthy.' 'H. P. McCarthy?' 'Yes,' said I again, 'H. P. McCarthy.' He came up to me. 'Sam tells me that you claim that your berth is occupied. Lower seven was assigned to H. P. McCarthy and to no one else. As a matter of fact there are only two people in this extra car: you and a salesman, C. E. Schweers.'

" 'Is that right?' said I. It annoyed me that the conductor took so much for granted; he had never even peeped into the berth, and already he was turning to go. 'Just a minute! Mr. Schweers is out on the platform. Mr. McCarthy is right here, yours truly, and I say that there's a man in lower seven!' And I pulled aside the curtain and the conductor looked in and saw the man there. It wounded his pride to find that he was wrong, and so he called loudly to the sleeping man. But the man didn't move. So he went over to him and reached his hand in to shake the sleeper.

"Now I couldn't see what happened, but I was staring right into the conductor's face, and I saw his expression change so rapidly that I thought he was going to faint. His face went white altogether. He pulled his hand out quickly, as if he had been touching a hot iron; and then he pushed the curtains wide apart to admit as much light as possible. Then he looked in again. All the time I could see the man lying there in the light admitted by the widely opened curtains. I said nothing. He turned to me and pointed at the sleeper. 'McCarthy, reach in there and touch him.'

"I thought it was an odd request, but I did it, and I'll wager any amount that my face went as white as his did. For I swear that I saw that man there with the coverlet turned back at his shoulders; I saw that, but my hand felt the undisturbed smoothness of the coverlet! And as I looked, my hand went straight through the man! Sam left by one door as Mr. Schweers came in by the other. The conductor and I stood in the aisle staring stupidly at the sleeper in my berth.

"A smothered exclamation from Schweers caused us to turn to him. He stood before berth three, the lower, staring at something. We knew what he would say before he said it. 'There's a man in my berth!'

"The conductor stared at him; I stared at him. He turned to the conductor. 'Well, what are you going to do about it? I'm not paying for a filled berth!' 'Feel him,' the conductor stammered. 'Yes,' said I, 'feel him.' He looked oddly at us, but obediently he reached in to feel him. And shortly there were three white-faced people in the aisle of the extra Pullman, all staring stupidly at a man sleeping in the berth of a Pullman car.

" 'By God,' said the conductor with effort, 'there's some mystery in this,' a fact which had not escaped the notice of any of us. He moved resolutely to berth six and pulled aside the curtains. And there lay a

woman sleeping, and again, what we saw, we could not feel! And the three of us made the rounds, and every berth, upper and lower, was occupied by a man, woman, or child. And we came back to berth seven and stood there staring at the sleeper.

"And while we stood there, the door opened at the end of the car, and a thin little man who wore a conductor's blue suit with brass buttons walked in and looked nervously around. He had the attitude as of being summoned, and looking for whoever had summoned him."

"Not so, Mr. McCarthy. The conductor had a premonition that all was not well and he came into the Pullman to justify or destroy that premonition." It was the little man, the newcomer, who had spoken. But no one seemed to have heard him.

"But we didn't stare very much longer," continued the man with the gold spectacles. "For suddenly the thin little conductor that had entered, vanished in the side of the Pullman car, and when we turned back to look at the sleepers we saw only the unrumpled spreads on our beds!

"Immediately the conductor rushed out onto the rear platform. Mr. Schweers and I followed him. We were going round the famous Horseshoe Curve. The country was all radiant in the bright moonlight.

"The conductor turned to us. 'Do either of you know what happened here at this spot one year ago today?' 'No,' said Schweers, 'I can't think of anything.' I, too, was forced to shake my head. 'What?' returned the conductor; 'have both of you forgotten the famous Midnight Express wreck of last August 7?' Of course we hadn't. 'It happened on that spot just a little way back there in the moonlight, on a night just like this. Seventy-seven people died in that wreck. This car is one that was salvaged from the wreckage and was rebuilt. This is its first trip in its rebuilt form.' 'But the people in the berths?' interrupted Schweers. 'Yes, those people in the berths. You noticed they all disappeared on the spot of the accident. Didn't they? Well, figure it out for yourselves, gentlemen.' And with that he went back to his post.

"And that's what I say to you, gentlemen, figure it all out for yourselves. Were those sleepers, or weren't they? For my part I am convinced."

There was a meditative silence. Then the man with the gold spectacles spoke again.

"By the way, didn't one of you gentlemen say something about a premonition the phantom conductor had? I thought someone said something about it, but as I recollect the accident the conductor was killed at once, so you couldn't possible know how he felt before the accident. Didn't anyone say something?"

And all of the men turned to the fifth chair upon which the thin, little man in the faded blue conductor's suit with brass buttons had been sitting. There was no answer.

And the firelight flickered on the bolt of the locked door.

A Startling Weird-Scientific Story Is

The Time-Raider

By EDMOND HAMILTON

The Story So Far

WHILE exploring the ruins of Angkor, Professor Cannell is captured by the Time-Raider, a creature from fifteen thousand years in the future, which sweeps back through time for its victims to build up an army of warriors with which the Kanlars can overwhelm the parent city of Kom. Cannell's friends, Wheeler and Lantin, build a time-car and pursue the Raider into the future, but are captured by the Kanlars and held prisoner with the teeming hordes of warriors in the City of the Pit. The two friends, with Denham (an English soldier of the time of George III), D'Alord (a French musketeer), Fabrius (a Roman legionary) and Ixtil (an Aztec cacique), plan to escape up the spiral stairway and flee to the city of Kom in Lantin's time-car, which is hidden near the city of the Kanlars.

CHAPTER 14

UP THE STAIR

WHEN we entered the broad clearing of the plaza, we found it almost entirely deserted. Above us loomed the winding, spiral stair, and where that stair touched the pit's floor, we saw the blaze of ruddy light that illuminated the high, barred gate of the stair. Keeping well within the shadows, we passed toward the farther edge of the plaza, and in the darkness there, Lantin and I took up our position directly beneath the lowest curve of the spiral stairway, which hung in the air some thirty feet above our heads. Even where we stood, we could hear the tramp of feet around the stair's curve, as guards came and went, constantly patrolling the lower part of the airy pathway. And, too, we heard the chatter and broken laughter of the other guards massed inside the gate.

Speaking in whispers, Denham said, "Be ready to make your attempt at any moment now. But be sure that all the guards on the stair have come down to the gateway before you try it."

"If we get out and come back with aid," I said, rapidly, "where will we find you?"

He reflected for a moment, then said, "You know that tall barracks-building at the northern edge of the pit, right under the wall?"

"The one that is roofed?" I asked, and he nodded. "Yes, that's the one. Well, we four will spend all our nights on that roof from now on. You could come straight down the shaft, in your flying-car, and pick us up from that roof in the darkness without the knowledge of any here in the pit. But first, go and get aid from the people of Kom, as we planned."

"And Cannell?" said Lantin. "You will look for him?"

"Never fear," answered D'Alord, "we'll find him for you."

The calm voice of Fabrius broke into our speech. "It is time to do our part at the gate," he said to Denham, and the Englishman nodded. "Goodbye," he told us. "I know you'll do your best." A warm hand-clasp from each, and then they had slipped away into the shadows.

For a minute or so, Lantin and I stood silent, listening to the tramp of feet on the stair above us, and then a sudden high-pitched cry broke on our ears from the center of the plaza. It was D'Alord's voice, and he was shouting at the top of his lungs, "Out,

This story began in WEIRD TALES for October

comrades, out! We are to be loosed on Kom tonight!"

The cry rang out over the silent city, and then was repeated, but louder, the Frenchman's three friends adding their voices to his. There was an uneasy murmur from the guards at the gate, and one among them called to the Frenchman, whom they could not see in the darkness, to cease his shouting.

He went on with the cry, unheeding, and now, out of the buildings along the branching streets, men were pouring, running toward the plaza. They heard D'Alord's cry and took it up, thinking that his statement was a true one, and repeating it.

"Loose us on Kom tonight!" they bellowed, rushing toward the gate of the stair and pressing against it. Away across the great clearing, we saw a sea of faces around the ruddy lighted gate, pressing against it and against the high wall that balustraded the stair's length for the first few yards. And from all around, from all of the nine branching streets, came others, sword in hand, afire to be led out to loot the city whose riches had been many times described to them.

They beat against the barred gate in one buffeting wave of solid humanity, in eager hope of freedom and pillage. Their cry rose up like that of a single, vast voice, but in a thousand different tongues.

"Loose us tonight! Loose us on Kom tonight!"

There were anxious cries from the guards on the stair as the great mob battered at the gate. Those of the guards who patrolled the stair's upper part ran down swiftly to aid their fellows in holding the gate. It was this that Lantin and I awaited, and at once I grasped the metal grappling-hook, whirled it round my head by the attached rope, and then sent it hurtling through the air toward the edge of the stair above us.

It struck the outside of the stair's low wall with a loud clang that brought my heart to my throat, and that I feared would attract the attention of the guards at the gate, even over the clamor of the crowd. But the hook had not caught and fell down beside me.

Before I could throw it again there was a warning whisper from Lantin, and in a moment a solid group of some fifty men rushed by us, heading toward the riot at the gate, news of which had evidently penetrated to the city's farthest reaches. They raced by, not seeing us in the darkness, and after them came four or five single stragglers who likewise passed us without stopping. Then, the coast again being clear for the moment, I slung up the hook again, with more force than before, and felt a throb of relief when it caught, slid a little along the edge of the stair-wall, and then caught again.

I tried the rope hastily, but it held firm, so I hastily began to climb up it, by means of the thick knots along its length. Scrambling up with panicky swiftness, I reached the rail, pulled myself over, and lay gasping for a moment on the stair. Then, leaning over the rail, I signaled to Lantin, whom I could see but dimly in the darkness. Bracing myself against the wall of the stair, I pulled in the rope until after a seeming eternity my friend's head appeared above the wall. He scrambled over, and then, winding the rope around my body and tossing the hook as far away as possible, I stood for a moment motionless.

Across the plaza, and below us, was the gate, flooded with crimson light and alive with activity. The mobs of the city's dwellers were pressing against the gate, while the guards were repelling them by thrusting through the bars with their long spears. And from all the long streets that stretched away into the darkness

there came the sound of many running feet, and the cries of excited men. Certainly the riot which our friends had kindled to aid us was no mean one.

A MOMENT only I watched the scene below, then turned, and with Lantin beside me, began the long climb up the spiral stair.

As we toiled up along the steeply slanting spiral, the clamor at the gates below gradually lessened in volume as we drew away from it. That the riot below had not yet been quelled, though, was evident, for before we had been on the stair ten minutes, a tiny beam of blue light flashed out at the gate, a narrow little shaft of azure light that clove up to the shaft above us, and seemed to stab straight up to the metal cover of that shaft.

I remembered Denham's words concerning the signaling of the guards, and wondered if that was the cause of the little light. In a minute it vanished, but as we raced on up around the great spiral, a faint sound came down to us from far above, a grating clash of metal that we could barely hear.

"The temple floor!" I cried to Lantin. "They've swung it aside! They've uncovered the shaft of the stairway!"

He did not answer, out of breath from the toilsome climb. Before many more minutes had passed, we had progressed half-way from the floor of the cavern to its roof, up the stair. Abruptly something hissed down from above through the circle of the spiral stair. The hissing was repeated, and now I saw that it had been caused by a number of thick ropes that had been dropped from above, and that now swung free at the center of the stairway's spiral.

I grasped Lantin, flung myself flat on the stair, pulling him down with me. And not a moment too soon, for peering cautiously over the low wall, I saw dark shapes flashing down along those swinging cables, in long strings, one after another. When they had passed, we jumped to our feet and sped on.

"The guards from above," I told my companion. "Let's hope that all above have gone down."

On we raced, around and around the spiral, ever upward. The sound of the riot in the pit had faded from our ears by now, and we came to the roof of the cavern, and the shaft that pierced it. On we went, the wall of the shaft on our left side now, and we hugged that wall closely as we sped up the narrow pathway.

I judged that we had traversed two-thirds of the stair's length, when Lantin suddenly halted. When I turned, he held up a warning hand, listening intently.

"Hear it?" he asked, in a low voice.

I listened tensely, and in a moment heard the sound that had halted him. It was a rhythmic, regular thudding, and seemed to come from a point some distance above us, and across the shaft from us.

"The guards!" he whispered. "Some of them are coming down the stair!"

All the blood drove from my heart at the thought, for we were caught on the airy stairway without chance to advance or retreat. And every minute that I stood there in indecision, the tramping feet of the guards were nearing me. Why they were descending by the stair instead of the ropes, I could not guess, though it may have been that they had already started down the stair before the alarm from below. But whatever the reason, they were coming nearer and nearer, until finally they were directly across the shaft, coming around the down-slanting curve of the stairway toward us.

My brain, momentarily stupefied by the oncoming deadly peril, again acted, and with frantic speed I unrolled the rope that was wound round my body. The low wall that protected the stair's right side was pierced at regular intervals with circular, ornamental openings, and swiftly I passed the rope through one of these and tied it securely, then tied its other end into a double loop. At once Lantin saw my purpose, and with a muttered "Good!" he set his foot in one of the loops, while I did the same with the other.

Swiftly the tramping feet were coming around the curve toward us, though in the murky darkness of the shaft we could make out nothing. Feet in the loops at the rope's end, we grasped the low wall of the stair and gently swung ourselves over it. Then, hanging above the abyss, we lowered ourselves until we swung some twenty feet below the stair, floating gently back and forth at the rope's end, with nearly two miles of space below us.

The marching guards came quickly around the stair's curve, and I held my breath as they passed the place where our rope was tied. If one but felt it and slashed carelessly with a knife, we would hurtle down to death on the floor of the pit, far below. But the guards passed on, and I could plainly hear the command of their leader to move faster, as they went by us.

Waiting until they had progressed to the opposite side of the shaft, Lantin and I began to pull ourselves up. Slowly, toilsomely, we fought our way upward until our hands gripped the stair's rail and we were able to scramble over it onto the steps.

As I rolled over the wall onto those steps, the hilt of my rapier struck the metal stairway with a loud jar. Appalled, I lay tense for minutes, but there was no sound to indicate the guards had heard, and we could hear their marching footsteps dying away below.

I rose to my feet, then, breathing hard. "A near shave, that," I told Lantin, who was also struggling to regain his breath. "If those guards had caught us on the stair, it would have been all up with us." Untying the rope from the wall, I again wound it round my body, and stepped up to where Lantin awaited me.

He was looking back the way we had come, peering into the darkness. As I stepped up toward him he cried suddenly, "Look out, Wheeler!" and as I instinctively threw myself flat on the stairway, a heavy knife hurtled out of the air behind me and passed over me, striking the wall. I jumped to my feet and turned, ripping out my sword.

Five steps down the stair from us a guard was standing, a tall, dark-faced fellow whom I could just see in the nightmare blackness of the shaft. In a flash, I knew that the clang of my rapier on the stairway had been heard, by this fellow at least, and that he had come back to investigate and had found us.

The man below me uttered a hoarse cry, and ran straight up toward me, his long spear aimed at my heart. But by now my own rapier was out, and avoiding the spear by a quick sidestep, I thrust with my blade at his throat, where no armor protected him. The stab was a true one, and he sank to the stair with a choking, terrible cry that rang out eerily there in the vast dark shaft. From far below his cry was answered. There was no time to lose, and we pressed on up the stair.

But now there were cries from below, and a bugle peal came up toward us. It was evident that the alarm had been sounded by the cry of the guard I had killed, and that we were being pursued.

I knew that we were very near to the stair's top, by then, but although we knew the metal cover of the shaft was not in place, there was no light from the great opening above us, the great temple being as dark as the shaft below it.

"Pray God there are no guards at the top of the stair," I cried to Lantin, as we sped upward. He did not answer, and from his agonized breathing I knew that he was out of wind from our long, torturing climb. And, away across the shaft now, there was a chorus of shouts as the guards beneath raced after us. Their cries halted for a moment, and by this I knew that they had found the body of the man I had killed. Then, with yelps of rage, they sped on after us.

We staggered drunkenly up the last curve of the stair. Out of the darkness appeared the little collapsible stairway which joined the temple's black ring of flooring with the great spiral on which we stood. There was no sign of the presence of any guards around or above it, so I jerked out the sword at my belt, and clasping it in one hand, strode cautiously up the little stair until I stood on the black flooring that was the rim of the shaft up which we had come.

Dense darkness reigned in the gigantic building, and the complete silence in it showed me that it was deserted. Lantin was beside me now, and the cries of the pursuing guards were ringing up the shaft ever louder, as they neared us. I sprang to the building's wall, clawing frantically along its side.

Abruptly my hands encountered the thick lever I was searching for, and as I jerked it down as far as it would go, I sobbed with relief. There was a loud click, and the little collapsible stair swung up and folded into an aperture in the wall.

"That will hold them on the stair, for a time," I told my friend, who had come up to me and was grasping my arm. As we raced around the wall to the building's entrance and exit, I explained in a few words what I had done. It was well for us, too, that I had remembered how the little stair was folded and unfolded, for as we sped down the tunneled gateway to the outside air, there came a shout of baffled rage from behind us, as the guards on the stair found their progress thus stopped.

Speeding down the arched tunnel through the temple's great wall, we emerged at last into the open air. For a moment, heedless of the clamor in the temple behind us, we stood with swelling hearts, breathing in the free air, expanding, almost, there beneath the limitless sky, after our sojourn in the cramped cavern below.

Darkness reigned over the city of the Kanlars, a darkness intensified by the absence of moon or stars above. From where we stood, the broad street, plashed with ruddy light from the glowing bulbs along its length, stretched away to the east, piercing the mass of winking lights that betokened the city's presence. Even from where we stood, we could see that there were many of the guards in the street, and there was no chance of our passing them unchallenged.

I turned to Lantin, but before I could speak we both shrank back into the temple's entrance. Footsteps were sounding on the ground near us, coming toward us along the outside of the temple's wall!

We crouched against the wall of the tunneled entrance, hearing the footsteps come nearer. From the temple behind us came the faint, raging clamor of the guards on the stair, who were still blocked by my stratagem. Then two figures appeared in the entrance of the tunnel, two ghostly white figures who were advancing through the darkness.

"Slaves!" muttered Lantin, and from the white robes and stiff movements, I saw that he had guessed the identity of the two aright. They walked on toward us, then passed us, at arm's length, walking stiffly, mechanically, past us. Whether or not they saw us, I can not say, though if they had glimpsed us, I doubt whether their soulless natures would have understood the significance of our presence there. At any rate, they passed us by, and proceeded on down the tunnel.

My sword was in my hand, and grasping it by the blade six inches or more beneath the hilt, I stole quickly down the tunnel after the white-robed figures. As quietly as possible, I hastened after them, and in a moment the heavy hilt of my rapier swung down on their skulls in two swift blows, and they slumped to the floor. A low call brought Lantin to my side, and we hastily pulled the long white robes from the two on the floor, and put them on over our own clothing. I shuddered with deep loathing, in the process, for these two men on the floor were icy-cold to the touch. Dead-alive, and slaves to the Kanlars! I hoped, at least, that my blows had released them from their dreadful servitude.

Disguised now by the white garments, we hastened again out of the tunnel and down the broad ramp into the red-lit street. We passed some distance along that street before we came near to any of the guards, and when we did so, we changed our pace, walking stiffly and rigidly, eyes staring straight ahead, striving to give to our faces the blank, deathly expression of the faces of the slaves.

We were unchallenged, the guards passing us without giving us more than a casual glance. And as we passed group after group of the armored men, we began to breathe easier, though we still kept to our unlifelike walk and expression.

As we drew farther toward the city's edge, the street became more deserted. The buildings began to lessen in size and frequency, and we were not far from the spot where the red lights along the street ended and it became a road.

Abruptly, I clutched Lantin's arm. From far behind us, from the temple whence we had fled, there rose a great ringing sound, a vast bell-note that echoed out over all the city clearly. It was repeated, and now, from far behind us also, came a dim, angry clamor, a score or more of raging shouts, through which there cut the clear note of a bugle.

"The guards!" I whispered to Lantin, tensely. "Someone has found them there on the stair! They're after us!"

"Faster," he muttered to me, without turning. "We're almost out of the city."

It was so, in truth, for we were nearing the end of the street's lighted part, while on each side the buildings were becoming fewer. We had met no one on the street for the last few minutes, and as we passed under the last of the glowing bulbs, I turned and cried to my friend, "Out of the city, Lantin!"

He caught his breath, turned to me, his face livid, and whispered, "For God's sake, Wheeler, be still! That guard over there is watching us!"

My heart contracted suddenly, as I looked toward the left of the street and saw the man he referred to, a guard in full armor who stood at the doorway of a small building and regarded us suspiciously. No doubt his attention had been aroused by the spectacle of one slave talking to another, and I cursed my folly in crying out to Lantin.

We passed on, hearts thumping, into the darkness that lay beyond the lane of crimson light. Once safe within it, we swiftly shed the white robes, whose length hampered our

movements, and then set out along the road at a rapid trot.

Away back in the city, the disturbed, angry clamor of our pursuers lessened, faded. We were in open country now, and as the road soon ended, we fled on over the long, grassy swells toward the east, toward the hills and the valley where our time-car was hidden.

"Safe!" I exulted, as we stumbled on through the thick darkness. "They'll never even know what direction we took."

"They will if the guard who saw us talking tells them what he saw," replied Lantin, and I sobered.

"Even then——" I began, but broke off suddenly, and looked back. "Lantin!" I shouted. "Lantin!"

Out of the city toward us were streaming a hundred or more men, carrying with them on long poles many of the flashing red light-giving bulbs, whose crimson rays struck down and glinted on the armor and spear-points of the men who carried them. Over a mile behind, yet the gap between us was fast decreasing as they came straight on toward us.

"The grass!" I gasped, as we stumbled on; "they can track us easily by it!"

The grass over which we ran was high and seemingly very dry and brittle, so that at every step we crushed down great masses of it into a trail that a child could have followed. And a great, wolflike shouting came from behind, as our pursuers struck our track.

On we ran, lungs laboring and hearts near to bursting, but steadily the guards behind us drew nearer until they were within a half-mile of us. By that time, we knew that we must be drawing near to the valley where our car was concealed, and then it was that our real race began.

I heard Lantin's breath coming in great sobs, and knew that he was almost winded. The long climb up the stair from the pit and the flight through the city had sapped his strength, and his endurance was near its breaking point.

Through the darkness, a darker mass loomed up, and as we sped toward it, it showed itself to us as the little wood that lay across the valley's mouth. More by blind chance than by design, I think, we had come straight toward our objective, and now we struggled through the thicket with frantic bursts of speed.

We emerged from the wood into the open valley, and as we did so, Lantin sank to the ground.

"Go on, Wheeler," he gasped. "You can get to the car and get away. I can't go farther."

I looked back, and saw that our pursuers were advancing in a broad line through the wood, carrying forward a chain of the ruddy lights so that we might not hide from them in the shadows. There was no grass beneath the trees, and they could not track us in that way, but came on swiftly, for all that, shouting to each other mirthfully.

"I can't leave you here," I told Lantin. "If you stay, I stay."

"Go on!" he ordered. "You can make it, without me. Hurry!"

I glanced back, hesitated a moment, then swiftly stooped and swung an arm under Lantin's shoulders, half lifting him to his feet. Then, half dragging, half carrying him, I toiled up the valley toward our hidden car.

I did not look back, but long rays of red light stabbed past me as our pursuers and their lights emerged from the wood. By that crimson glare they saw me, for a savage cry went up. A few strides and I was at the spot on the valley's bottom, on the slope above which lay the time-car. With fast-waning strength, I started up that slope.

Down the valley toward me bounded a score of men, spears and swords gleaming in the light of the

bulb-torches behind them. Dragging Lantin on, blind with sweat and every muscle straining to its utmost power, I toiled up the slope, more like a goaded, maddened beast than a human being, while Lantin still besought me to drop him and save myself.

And up the slope after me raced the shouting guards, a hundred yards behind and gaining every second. I burst through the screen of boughs around our car, and sobbed with relief to see that it was still there, untouched. I spun open the circular door in its top, and dropped Lantin inside. I had just placed my feet inside the opening, when a dozen of the armored guards burst through the screen of branches, their red bulb-torches illuminating the little clearing with crimson light.

They stopped short on seeing me, some fifteen feet away. The three nearest me raised their right arms above their heads, a heavy spear poised in each. Then, like leaping metal serpents, the three heavy, dagger-pointed weapons flashed through the air toward me.

But in that split second there came the click of a switch from the interior of the car, a gust of sudden wind smote me, and then the guards, torches, and even the three spears in midair had vanished, and the car, Lantin and I were speeding on into time.

CHAPTER 15

OVER THE ICE

We had flashed through two days and nights before Lantin judged it safe to stop our progress in time. By then, we had started the space-movement mechanism, and had sent the car up to a height of a mile above the ground. Once there, we snapped off the time-wave, and hung in midair, motionless in both time and space.

It was early morning now, bright and sunny, and peering down over the car's side to the valley below, I could see no sign of life. In the two days through which we had passed so quickly, it was evident that the guards had given up searching for us and had returned to the city. I wondered how they explained to themselves our sudden disappearance.

I slid down into the car's interior, now, and closed the circular door above me. Sinking down on the padded floor with utter weariness, I tried to express to Lantin my thanks for saving my life, since had he acted a fraction of a second later, I should have been struck down by the flashing spears of our pursuers. But Lantin would not hear me, declaring that alone he would have been unable ever to reach the car, and so, conscious that without the other each of us would have perished, we let the matter rest.

In a few minutes, Lantin returned to the controls, and swinging the car in a great circle, pointed it south, opening up the power gradually until we were racing down toward the southern horizon with our highest speed. Soon, far ahead, the glistening ice came into view, and in a few minutes after that the green land behind us had dwindled to a speck against the ice, and then vanished. High above the ground, we sped across the endless ice, splitting the air like a meteor.

Hour after hour we fled on, across the gleaming fields of whiteness. The cold air had forced us to turn on the heater of the car, and even with it, we were none too warm. Below, from horizon to horizon, billowed the frozen fields, with here and there a white dune or hill to break the monotony of the landscape.

Finally, in midafternoon, a thickening line of black showed against the southern horizon. We reduced our speed, and sinking closer to the

ground, sped down toward the black line.

It seemed to grow as we came nearer, loomed larger and larger, until at last we hung above the black mass, gazing down at it in silent awe. And it was a wall.

But what a wall! A gigantic, mountain-high and mountain-thick barrier of solid black metal, extending as far as we could see, from the eastern to the western horizon. A colossal barrier of metal, all of a mile and a half in height, with a thickness at the bottom of nearly a mile and at the top of half that much. A smooth-sided, dully gleaming mass beside which the walls of mighty Babylon would have been toylike, microscopic.

And with that wall, the ice stopped. On the northern side of the barrier, the fields of ice stretched away as far as the eye could reach. But on its southern side there was no ice. Grass of dull green, and small trees, gnarled and twisted by the glacier's cold, lay to the wall's south, a vista of rolling, bleak plains that extended down to the southern horizon.

Hanging above the mighty, flat-topped barrier, we surveyed it, stupefied. All around us was no sign of life. No sound, no movement. Only the white expanse to the north, the green one to the south, and between them, separating and defining them, the titanic wall.

Lantin spoke, excitedly. "You see its purpose, Wheeler? It has been built here as a dam to hold back the glacier, to stem the tides of ice. But *how* built? To think that men can do things like that!"

I saw now that Lantin spoke aright, and that it was to dam the engulfing, southward-flowing ice that the wall had been built. And I was struck with awe at the achievement. What were the great Chinese wall and Martian canals, to this? Here in the far future, fifteen thousand years ahead of our own time, we were seeing another step in the conquest of nature by man. He had leveled mountains and turned rivers, and here, below us, had thrust forth a hand and halted the resistless glaciers.

An hour we hung above the colossal barrier, fascinated, and then remembered our mission and sped again south.

As we rocketed on, we could see no sign of life below, nothing but the bleak arctic plains with here and there some sparse vegetation.

Again Lantin cried out, and when I looked south, I discerned an odd flicker of light, a seeming hesitating wavering of the air. We sped down toward it, dropping down again to a scant mile above the ground.

Far ahead showed expanses of bright green, and as we drew nearer, I saw that there were small patches of white against the green, oddly regular in shape. As we sped on, these white blotches changed to buildings, and the green to verdant lawns and gardens, in which they were set. Again Lantin stopped the car, while we looked down, puzzled. For in a straight line from east to west, was the boundary, the limit, of the gardens and the buildings. North of that line were the cold, wind-swept plains and stunted, arctic vegetation, while south of the same invisible line, seemingly only a few feet from the bleak tundras, began the luxuriant, tropical gardens, stretching away south as far as the eye could see. And also the elusive flicker of light seemed to begin at the same point, and to be present everywhere south of it. If you have ever seen the flicker of heated air above railway tracks or hot sand, on a warm afternoon, you will understand me. It was like that, an elusive, fleeting wavering in the air, below us.

"I can't understand it," said Lantin, pointing down to the invisible line which separated arctic world

from tropic. "Gardens like those, only a few feet away from the cold plain."

"It's beyond me," I told him. "Another thing, Lantin, the car is as cold as ever, even with the heater functioning. Yet down there the country looks tropical."

He shook his head, and starting the car, we sped on south, as cold as we had been above the glacier, while below was a landscape that reminded me of Florida, in my own time. Set in the lawns and gardens, the white buildings became more numerous as we sped on. We could see that they were of varying shapes, some cone-shaped, others cubical, while still others were spherical, like great globes of white stone sunk a little in the earth. The cone-shaped buildings were the most numerous, I saw, though there were many of the other designs. But nowhere was there a building that was cylindrical.

Ever and again our eyes caught that inexplicable flicker in the air below us. We were flying with reduced speed, now, less than a mile above the ground, and beneath us the lawns and gardens had disappeared, giving way to the crowded buildings of a great city. In the broad streets of that city were tiny, moving figures, and many vehicles seemed to flash continually along the wide avenues. But there was no sign of aircraft.

Always the buildings grew larger, and it was plain that we were approaching the city's center. Away ahead of us a great cone began to loom up gigantically, an immense, cone-shaped building that was fully as large as the temple of the Raider, back in the city of the Kanlars. We changed our course, headed down toward the colossal center building. As we drew nearer, we saw that it was smooth and unbroken of side, and at its top it was truncated, flattened, the summit of the cone forming a flat, circular platform a few hundred feet in diameter. We glimpsed this much, and then Lantin sent the car down on a long slant toward the cone's flat summit.

"We'll land there," he said. "This city is Kom, without doubt."

I nodded but did not answer, for my attention was engaged by something else. As we slanted smoothly down toward the cone, with moderate speed, I noticed that the strange flicker of light that had puzzled us seemed to be growing plainer, stronger, nearer. It apparently hung steady above the cone, a few rods over its summit. And as we rushed down toward that summit, the truth struck me, and the nature of the odd flickering was clear to me in a sudden flash of intuition.

"Lantin!" I screamed. "That flicker! It's a roof, a transparent roof! Stop the car!"

His face livid, he reached toward the space-mechanism control, but before ever his hand touched it, there was an ear-splitting crash, I was thrown violently forward in the car, and as my head hit its steel wall with stunning force, something seemed to explode in my brain, and consciousness left me.

CHAPTER 16

BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF KOM

THROUGH a throbbing, pain-racked darkness, light came down to me, stronger and stronger. There was a dull, monotonous sound that seemed to float down to me from great heights. I turned, struggled, opened my eyes.

I was lying on a soft mat, set on a low, narrow platform of metal. Above me was a high, white ceiling, and as I half-raised myself on one arm, I was able to survey the rest of the room in which I lay.

It was a bright, airy room, white-walled and sunny. At one end of it were high, open windows, without

glass or shutter, and through them streamed the sunlight and the soft air. Except for the bed on which I lay, and two metal chairs of simple design, the room was quite bare, but it was an austere, clean bareness that was pleasing to the eye.

Now memory rushed back to me, and sudden fear came with it. Where was Lantin? Had he survived the crash? I began to struggle up from my reclining position, but sank back for a moment as a door in one of the walls slid aside, and a man entered the room.

Tall and commanding of appearance, with dark hair and clear youthful face, yet something about the eyes stamped him as a man of middle age, almost elderly. He was dressed in a short white tunic, bordered with three narrow stripes of purple. When he perceived that I was awake and regarding him, he paused for a moment in surprize, then came on toward me.

A friendly smile illumined his face as he spoke to me, in the Kanlar tongue.

"You are awake, Wheelaire? And your friend, too, has just awakened."

"Lantin!" I exclaimed. "He is all right? He was not hurt?"

The other smiled. "No more than yourself. Would you like to see him?"

I assented eagerly, and made to rise, but he pushed me back. "It is not needful," he said, and reaching down to the foot of the metal platform on which I lay, he touched a concealed button. At once, the platform rose gently from its supports until it swung in the air four feet above the floor. When my new-found friend laid his hand on its edge, it moved gently through the air under the impetus of a slight push.

He saw my astonishment, and explained, "The metal is elorium, the same material we once used for our air-boats. It is weightless, under the influence of certain forces." Then, as an afterthought, he added, "My name is Kethra."

Pushing my platform easily through the air before him, he was moving toward the door of the room when I stopped him with a gesture. "Can I look from the window there a moment?" I asked, indicating the high openings. By way of answer, he stepped over to the window in question, his hand on my platform's edge bringing me there also. I raised myself, gazed eagerly out.

I saw at once that I must be near the top of the great cone-shaped building we had been making for when we crashed. Below, and all around, the white buildings extended to the horizons, looking like thousands of huge geometry-models cast down indiscriminately, cones and spheres and cubes. High above them as I was, yet I could discern swift movement in the streets, crowds of pedestrians surging to and fro, flashing vehicles of strange design, that followed the broad thoroughfares, rising in the air here and there to pass over each other. Glancing away down the long, slanting side of the cone near whose summit I stood, I saw at its base other great crowds, who massed and swirled aimlessly around the building. I turned to Kethra.

"And this is Kom?" I said.

He nodded. "It is Kom."

I pointed toward the teeming crowds that eddied around the building's base. "You must count your people here by the millions?" I queried.

His face grew somber as he too looked down at the masses of humanity below. "It is seldom there are crowds like that," he said.. "But this is a time of great events, and our people gather around this building, which is the seat of the Council of Kom, that they may learn what decisions have been made."

He turned from the window, face solemn and unsmiling now, and with a slight push sent my platform drifting toward and through the door. Conducting me down a long corridor, he turned in at another room, similar in every detail to the one I had just left. And there, standing up and gazing down through an open window as I had just done, was Lantin.

He turned and saw me, came toward me anxiously. At a touch from Kethra, my platform sank down to the floor, and assisted by my friend, I rose weakly to my feet.

"You're all right, Wheeler?" he asked quickly. I assured him that I was, for the weakness and dizziness I had felt were rapidly leaving me. Lantin laughed ruefully. "What a fool's trick of mine, to smash straight down into that roof!" He pointed upward, toward the blue sky, and walking over to the window beside him, I looked up curiously.

There was the same flicker in the sky that I had noticed from above, an elusive, wavering flash of light that I knew now was caused by the sunlight glinting off the flat, transparent roof.

"The roof," I said to Kethra, "does it cover all the city?"

"All of Kom lies beneath it," he said. "Without it, could we live like this?" He swept an arm around in a wide gesture that included the soft, warm air, the open windows, and the white city below, laced with the greenery of gardens.

"But how is it built?" I asked. "How supported? Is it glass, or what material?"

"It's no material at all," he replied, astoundingly. "It's force."

I looked at him, a little incredulously. "Force? It was solid enough when we crashed into it."

"Yes, it is force," he smiled. "That's the reason it is almost invisible, from above or below. "It is a perpetual sheet of electric force, drawn over the city from end to end. It is so designed and projected, from a ring of stations around the city, that it excludes some vibrations of the ether, and allows others to enter. For instance, it excludes the vibrations called matter, such as air, or such as your car. All of the city's air is pumped in through special vents in the force-shield. On the other hand, it allows the vibrations of light and of radiant heat to enter, and so our city is lighted and heated by the sun itself. Without such a shield, we would be living in a city as bleak and cold as the plains that surround it."

"So we crashed into an invisible field of force," I said, and shook my head. "Well, it seemed solid enough when we hit it."

"The most powerful force in the world could not crash through it," said Kethra, "and it is fortunate that you were not going at high speed or you would have been annihilated. As it was, we found you both lying unconscious in your car, up on the force-shield, and as we can neutralize it at will, at given spots, we were able to bring you down to the city."

"But the car!" I cried. "It is not destroyed, is it? It was not completely smashed?"

He shook his head. "It was hardly damaged at all," he assured us. "The point, or prow, was bent back, but that has already been repaired." He paused a moment, then said an astounding thing. "The car does you credit, in its design. It is too bad that, after making it and coming so far into the future, you have been unable to find your friend."

I gasped and looked at Lantin. His face reflected utmost surprize, and he said, "I didn't tell him, Wheeler. I'll swear I didn't."

Kethra smiled. "Neither of you told me," he said. "But you have lain unconscious for a day, and in

that time we learned all your story, my friends, and learned how you came here to warn us of the peril beyond the ice, that peril of an evil being, whom you call the Raider."

"But how?" I asked helplessly.

In answer, he touched a button set in the wall, and motioned us to seat ourselves in the chairs beside the window. A green-robed servant entered, in a moment, with a metal cabinet. He handed this to Kethra, and then departed.

The cabinet was an oblong box of black metal, a yard or more in its greatest length. Our companion touched a stud in the floor with his sandaled foot, and a small square section of the floor sprang up on four legs, or supports, forming a little table. Setting the cabinet on this table, our friend opened it.

Inside was a small, gleaming apparatus, consisting of a squat little box on which was set a small horn like that of a radio loud-speaker, but much smaller. From the box a flexible cord led, splitting at its end into three separate cords, each of which was metal-tipped. Setting this on the table, Kethra then drew from the cabinet three or four small, shapeless objects, gray and withered and deeply wrinkled, smaller in size than a baseball, the nature of which I could not guess.

He turned to us, now. "This mechanism," he said, indicating the gleaming apparatus, "is what we call a brain-reader. As you know, the brain preserves in its convolutions an indelible, unchangeable record of every word and action. When we remember a thing, we simply refer to that record, which we call memory, but which is in reality a very tiny change, but a lasting one. And this apparatus, when connected to a human brain by way of the nervous system, reads, from the myriad convolutions of that brain, the record of memory which is stamped on those convolutions."

With a swift movement, he fastened three clamps of metal to his body, one above the forehead, one around the neck, and the other along his spine. "These clamps make direct contact to the nervous system, through the skin," he explained, "and to them I attach the three cords from the brain-reader," suiting the action to the word. This done, he snapped a switch in the little box beneath the horn, and at once a nasal, metallic voice began to speak from that horn, in the Kanlar tongue.

Kethra's own voice came to us above the twanging one from the brain-reader. "It is giving a record of my experiences within the last few hours," he explained, "and will go back farther and farther as it continues, back to my very first memory, if allowed to run. Or I can use it to concentrate on any given period of my own life, and it will read with unvarying accuracy the impressions and sensations of my brain during that period. A mechanical, perfect memory," and he snapped off the switch and removed the clamps from his body.

"Nor does its usefulness stop there," he added, while we stared dumfoundedly at the little mechanism. "Here," he went on, picking up one of the withered gray objects, "is a human brain, the brain of one of the great men of our people, who died five centuries ago. And yet every memory and every thought and sensation in his life, imprinted unchangeably on his brain, is available to us by using the brain-reader."

He rapidly fitted over the withered brain a hollow hemisphere of metal, and attached to it the cords from the apparatus. A snap of the switch, and again the same nasal voice broke

the silence, from the horn, speaking in the Kanlar tongue, and reading steadily on from the brain it was connected with, reciting the inmost thoughts and ideas and aspirations of a man dead for five hundred years. I shuddered, involuntarily, and Kethra snapped off the apparatus.

"It seems strange to you," he said, "but you will see the wisdom of such an apparatus. When a great man dies, a man of mental ability above the rest of us, his brain is removed, especially prepared, and then filed and indexed in a building reserved for that purpose. There are thousands of brains preserved there, and every one of them is available at all times, by means of the brain-reader, to aid us with its knowledge, its experience, its memories. Thus when a man dies among us, his intelligence does not die, but remains as a record for us to consult at will, a record of that man's ideas and achievements."

"And while we were unconscious," I broke in, "you used the brain-reader on us? Learned our story, learned why we came here?"

"It is so," he said, and his face darkened. "We sought to know who you might be, the first strangers ever to approach us. And from the brain-reader came your amazing tale, and we know all that you came to tell us, concerning that creature of evil you term the Raider. And it is that knowledge that has brought those crowds below to await the decision of the Council."

"But the Raider?" I cried. "*What* is it, Kethra? Do you know?"

"I know," he said simply, and a brooding expression dropped on his face. "I know," he repeated, "and all here in Kom know. And that you too may know, who have had dealings with this same Raider, I will relate to you what we do know. Soon the council meets, and you will be questioned further. But now——"

He was silent a moment, then spoke in a voice vibrant and low-toned.

"THE history of the Kanlars," he began, "the people of the cylinders, the evil ones whose doom draws near. Know, men of the past, that ages ago, though not so far back as your own time, our people dwelt in four mighty cities, each of which was nearly as large as Kom itself. There was no ice-flood from the north, then, and the country around those cities was green and fair, yet none lived in that country, all preferring the gayer life of the vast towns. Long ago, the people had learned to make their food from the soil direct, as we do today, and so there was no need of tilling the land, or living on it. And so, into the four great cities had drifted all the people in this land.

"In each city, the buildings were constructed of a different design. Here in Kom, all of the buildings were cone-shaped, and thus this became known as Kom, the city of cones, and we, the dwellers in it, as the people of the cones. Another city was the city of cubes, another the city of spheres, and still another the city of cylinders.

"Each of these four cities was free and independent, each ruled by a council selected by its inhabitants. And being thus independent, there arose rivalry between the cities, and fierce jealousy. Each strove to outdo the others, in their scientific achievements, and each strove to keep its blood from intermixing with the others. Thus in the city of cylinders, the Kanlars, or people of the cylinders, gradually evolved into a bright-haired race, while in Kom, the Khluns, or people of the cones, were a dark-haired race. And the other two cities differed likewise from each other and the rest.

"Ages passed, and then down from the north rolled a mighty tide of ice, sweeping over the whole land and submerging all under its frozen flood. It rolled down toward the four cities, and finally had forged south until it was at the gates of the city of cubes. In desperation, the people of the cubes appealed to those in Kom for shelter, and it was granted them. They came down to Kom, every one, and the ice rolled over and hid the city of cubes. Next it engulfed the city of spheres, and its people likewise found refuge in Kom, which was the most southern of all the four cities. And finally, the ice-tide swept over the city of cylinders, and its people, the Kanlars, were forced to seek refuge in Kom also, though they liked it not.

"But the ice did not stop. It came on, ever south, until it threatened to cover Kom also, and leave our people homeless and shelterless. So, taking counsel among themselves, the people of Kom set out to stop the progress of the glacial sheet.

"They kindled great uprisings far beneath the earth's surface, until the tortured earth heaved up in a great wall across the ice-flood's path. And then, that this wall of earth might not be swept away, the scientists of Kom showed them a way by which every kind of material could be transmuted at will into other elements, by a recasting of its electronic structure. And, using this power, the people of Kom smoothed the gigantic barrier they had created, and then, using the instruments their scientists had devised for them, they turned on the great wall a ray that changed it to metal by its power of element-transmutation. It was finished, and when the ice rolled down to this smooth mountain-range of metal, it was checked, halted. Far away, on either side, it rolled on and engulfed the country, but the wall so dammed it that it could not progress farther toward the city.

"Yet the cold of the glacier was not halted by the wall, and to combat that cold, the great shield of force was devised that stretches over all Kom, and into which you crashed in your car. It admitted the sun's light and heat, but excluded the cold winds from the glacier. And thus, having thwarted nature itself, the troubles of the people of Kom were seemingly at an end.

"The people of the other three cities settled down contentedly enough in Kom, and each people built their own type of dwelling, cube or sphere or cylinder. And all mixed, intermarried, and mingled in race, with the exception of the Kanlars, the people of the cylinders. These still held apart, though unobtrusively.

"And as the years went by, the scientists of Kom came to more and more wisdom. They found ways to strengthen their own bodies, so that they lived for great stretches of time, as we do yet. They sent their explorers out to other planets, they cast their vision out to the farthest stars. They learned to create life, and they learned to conquer death, almost. The flight of the soul from the body they could not control, for there is a wisdom above man's, but the body itself they could retain as moving and lifelike as in life itself, though soulless.

"It seemed, indeed, that no other steps of wisdom remained up which to climb. And then, without the knowledge of the other people, the Kanlar scientists set themselves to conquer the secret of time. Unable to find a way of controlling time themselves, of moving in it at will, they created a monstrous, undreamed-of thing, a thing of shapeless, inchoate body, which was yet living, and which could transform itself, at will, into mists and vapors, and in

that gaseous form could travel at will through time. And this thing the Kanlars made, setting in it three orbs of light that were its organs of sense and its seat of intelligence, and this thing is the same that you now call the Raider.

"This, indeed, happened in my own lifetime, a scant score of years ago. And when the Kanlars brought their creation before the supreme council of Kom, I was a member of that council.

"They explained the power of their creation, they showed its life, its intelligence. And they proposed to the council a plan which possession of the Raider made possible.

"They pointed out that since the Raider could travel at will through time, it could whirl back into the past, or into the future, and seize people from every age, bringing them back to our own time to be our slaves. Always there had been none but free people in our cities, nor were slaves needed, since nearly all of our work was done by machinery, yet such was the evil plan of the Kanlars.

"The council rejected the plan in horror. And it also warned the Kanlars that unless they destroyed the thing they had made, the council would hunt it out and destroy it itself. The Kanlars left in rage, and took with them the Raider, but later they promised to destroy it within a certain period of time, saying that they desired to study it further before doing so.

"So for a time they kept the Raider, and it grew swiftly in power and intelligence, until it became a deity to the Kanlars, a being whose every word to them was law. Again the council warned them to destroy their creation, and again they agreed to do so. But in secret, on a night soon after, every one of the Kanlars assembled on their air-boats and fled from the city, taking with them the Raider.

"We could not know where they had gone, but sent out many scouts to search for them. And when all our scouts had returned without finding trace of them, we decided that they had fled with their evil god to another planet, and so the matter rested. We had always thought that the ice-fields in the north extended clear to the pole, and could not know of the land there where the Kanlars had gone.

"But now, with the knowledge the brain-reader gleaned from you while you were unconscious, all the people in Kom know the peril that hangs over them, know that the Raider and the Kanlars have gathered thousands of fierce warriors from all ages, and that they plan to sweep down and loot our city and kill its people. So the council meets, now, to decide what course of action we will take."

Kethra finished, and I silently pondered his amazing story, but Lantin broke in with a query. "Two things puzzle me," he said; "how is it that you speak the same tongue as the Kanlars, and why are there no cylindrical buildings in the city below? You spoke of each people building its own design of dwellings here, but there are no cylinders."

"When the Kanlars fled," Kethra explained, "the cylinders were demolished, for none of the other peoples would then live in them. As to our language, it was always the same, for all the four cities. You call it the Kanlar tongue because you heard it first from them, but it is equally the language of the people of Kom."

BEFORE we could ask more questions, a single bell-note sounded from a corner of the room. "The council," murmured Kethra; "you are summoned before it."

He motioned us out of the room and led us down the corridor outside, toward a small elevator that was curiously familiar in appearance,

there in that building of the future. A lever was touched and we flashed silently down a long shaft, past level after level of the great cone's interior. The car stopped, and we stepped out of it into a small antechamber. Following Kethra across it, we strode through a high, arched entrance, into a great amphitheater, a semicircular room with bank on bank of rising tiers of seats. In each seat was a man attired like Kethra, and the gaze of all was instantly focused on us as we entered. On a dais at the semicircle's center sat four men, older than the others, and there was another chair beside the four, which was empty. A servant swiftly placed two collapsible seats on the dais, on which Lantin and I seated ourselves. Then Kethra strode to the front of the dais and began to address the assemblage.

He spoke in an even, unraised voice, but from the expressions on the faces of the council members it was easy to see that his words were of intense interest to them. He reviewed the history of Kom, which he had already briefly recounted to us, and then pointed out the peril that threatened the city. He concluded with a strong plea that the people of Kom should take the offensive and strike at the Kanlars and the Raider in their own city, rather than let the battle come to Kom.

When he had finished, there were many questions as to the means to be employed for the battle. It seemed that air-boats had not been used greatly of late in Kom, because of the difficulty of flying beneath the great roof of force, and thus it would be hard to transport a force over the icefields in any short space of time.

But Kethra waved aside these objections. A great fleet of air-boats could be made in a few days, he declared, if the people of Kom turned their energies toward it. As to weapons, the scientists of Kom could design these, and they would also be made in great numbers, as effective as possible.

A solidly built, white-haired man in a lower row stood up and exclaimed, "But what of the Raider?" (I give our own equivalent of the unpronounceable term used by the people of Kom for that being). "Remember he is powerful, how powerful we can not even guess. And, if hard-pressed, he can flee into time and bide his time to strike at us again, with or without the Kanlars."

"Not so," replied Kethra. "When we build our air-boats, we will equip each with the time-traveling apparatus invented by these two men, which is installed in their own car. Thus equipped, our air-boats will be able to pursue the Raider into time and destroy him, should he flee there."

There were other objections, other questions, but Kethra overrode them all. It was plain that he was intent on following his plan of striking at the Kanlars unexpectedly, instead of awaiting their attack, and he finally won the council over to his side. We were called on twice to furnish information on pertinent points, and finally, after hours of debate, the council voted by a large majority to build with all speed a great fleet of air-boats, equipped for time-traveling, like our own car. As soon as completed, and provided with weapons by the scientists, the entire force was to speed north under the leadership of Kethra, drop unexpectedly upon the city of the cylinders, and crush the Kanlars and the Raider forever.

The pursuit of the Raider through the future of the world, while the sun grows cold and the earth withers, is thrillingly described in the startling chapters that bring this story to a conclusion in next month's issue.

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

*Dracula's Guest**

By BRAM STOKER

WHEN we started for our drive the sun was shining brightly on Munich, and the air was full of the joyousness of early summer. Just as we were about to depart, Herr Delbrück (the maître d'hôtel of the Quatre Saisons, where I was staying) came down bareheaded to the carriage and, after wishing me a pleasant drive, said to the coachman, still holding his hand on the handle of the carriage door:

"Remember you are back by nightfall. The sky looks bright but there is a shiver in the north wind that says there may be a sudden storm. But I am sure you will not be late." Here he smiled, and added, "for you know what night it is."

Johann answered with an emphatic, "*Ja, mein Herr,*" and, touching his hat, drove off quickly.

When we had cleared the town, I said, after signaling to him to stop: "Tell me, Johann, what is tonight?"

He crossed himself, as he answered laconically: "*Walpurgis Nacht.*" Then he took out his watch, a great, old-fashioned German silver thing as big as a turnip, and looked at it, with his eyebrows gathered together and a litle impatient shrug of his shoulders. I realized that this was his way of respectfully protesting against the unnecessary delay, and sank back in the carriage, merely motioning him to proceed.

He started off rapidly, as if to make up for lost time. Every now and then the horses seemed to throw up their heads and sniffed the air suspiciously. On such occasions I often looked around in alarm. The road was pretty bleak, for we were traversing a sort of high, wind-swept plateau. As we drove, I saw a road that looked but little used, and which seemed to dip through a little, winding valley. It looked so inviting that, even at the risk of offending him, I called Johann to stop—and when he had pulled up, I told him I would like to drive down that road. He made all sorts of excuses, and frequently crossed himself as he spoke. This somewhat piqued my curiosity, so I asked him various questions. He answered fencingly, and repeatedly looked at his watch in protest. Finally I said:

"Well, Johann, I want to go down this road. I shall not ask you to come unless you like; but tell me why you do not like to go, that is all I ask." For answer he seemed to throw himself off the box, so quickly did he reach the ground. Then he stretched out his hands appealingly to me, and implored me not to go. There was just enough of English mixed with the German for me to understand the drift of his talk. He seemed always just about to tell me something—the very idea of which evidently frightened him; but each time he pulled himself up, saying, as he crossed himself: "*Walpurgis Nacht!*"

I tried to argue with him, but it was difficult to argue with a man when I did not know his language.

* This story was intended as an episode in Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, but was excised because of the length of the book.

The advantage certainly rested with him, for although he began to speak in English, of a very crude and broken kind, he always got excited and broke into his native tongue—and every time he did so, he looked at his watch. Then the horses became restless and sniffed the air. At this he grew very pale, and, looking around in a frightened way, he suddenly jumped forward, took them by the bridles and led them on some twenty feet. I followed, and asked why he had done this. For answer he crossed himself, pointed to the spot we had left and drew his carriage in the direction of the other road, indicating a cross, and said, first in German, then in English: "Buried him—him what killed themselves."

I remembered the old custom of burying suicides at cross-roads: "Ah! I see, a suicide. How interesting!" But for the life of me I could not make out why the horses were frightened.

Whilst we were talking, we heard a sort of sound between a yelp and a bark. It was far away; but the horses got very restless, and it took Johann all his time to quiet them. He was pale, and said: "It sounds like a wolf—but yet there are no wolves here now."

"No?" I said, questioning him; "isn't it long since the wolves were so near the city?"

"Long, long," he answered, "in the spring and summer; but with the snow the wolves have been here not so long."

Whilst he was petting the horses and trying to quiet them, dark clouds drifted rapidly across the sky. The sunshine passed away, and a breath of cold wind seemed to drift past us. It was only a breath, however, and more in the nature of a warning than a fact, for the sun came out brightly again. Johann looked under his lifted hand at the horizon and said:

"The storm of snow, he comes before long time." Then he looked at his watch again, and, straightway holding his reins firmly—for the horses were still pawing the ground restlessly and shaking their heads—he climbed to his box as though the time had come for proceeding on our journey.

I felt a little obstinate and did not at once get into the carriage.

"Tell me," I said, "about this place where the road leads," and I pointed down.

Again he crossed himself and mumbled a prayer, before he answered: "It is unholy."

"What is unholy?" I enquired.

"The village."

"Then there is a village?"

"No, no. No one lives there hundreds of years."

My curiosity was piqued: "But you said there was a village."

"There was."

"Where is it now?"

Whereupon he burst out into a long story in German and English, so mixed up that I could not quite understand exactly what he said, but roughly I gathered that long ago, hundreds of years, men had died there and been buried in their graves; and sounds were heard under the clay, and when the graves were opened, men and women were found rosy with life, and their mouths red with blood. And so, in haste to save their lives (aye, and their souls!—and here he crossed himself) those who were left fled away to other places, where the living lived, and the dead were dead and not—not something else. He was evidently afraid to speak the last words.

As he proceeded with his narration, he grew more and more excited. It seemed as if his imagination had got hold of him, and he ended in a perfect paroxysm of fear—white-faced, perspiring, trembling and looking round him, as if expecting that some dreadful presence would manifest

itself there in the bright sunshine on the open plain. Finally, in an agony of desperation, he cried: "*Walpurgis Nacht!*" and pointed to the carriage for me to get in.

All my English blood rose at this, and standing back, I said:

"You are afraid, Johann—you are afraid. Go home; I shall return alone; the walk will do me good." The carriage door was open. I took from the seat my oak walking-stick—which I always carry on my holiday excursions—and closed the door, pointing back to Munich, and said, "Go home, Johann — *Walpurgis Nacht* doesn't concern Englishmen."

The horses were now more restive than ever, and Johann was trying to hold them in, while excitedly imploring me not to do anything so foolish. I pitied the poor fellow, he was so deeply in earnest; but all the same I could not help laughing. His English was quite gone now. In his anxiety he had forgotten that his only means of making me understand was to talk my language, so he jabbered away in his native German. It began to be a little tedious. After giving the direction, "Home!" I turned to go down the cross-road into the valley.

With a despairing gesture Johann turned his horses toward Munich. I leaned on my stick and looked after him. He went slowly along the road for a while: then there came over the crest of the hill a man tall and thin. I could see so much in the distance. When he drew near the horses, they began to jump and kick about, then to scream with terror. Johann could not hold them in; they bolted down the road, running away madly. I watched them out of sight, then looked for the stranger, but I found that he, too, was gone.

With a light heart I turned down the side road through the deepening valley to which Johann had objected. There was not the slightest reason, that I could see, for his objection; and I daresay I tramped for a couple of hours without thinking of time or distance, and certainly without seeing a person or a house. So far as the place was concerned, it was desolation itself. But I did not notice this particularly till, on turning a bend in the road, I came upon a scattered fringe of wood; then I recognized that I had been impressed unconsciously by the desolation of the region through which I had passed.

I sat down to rest myself, and began to look around. It struck me that it was considerably colder than it had been at the commencement of my walk—a sort of sighing sound seemed to be around me, with, now and then, high overhead, a sort of muffled roar. Looking upward, I noticed that great thick clouds were drifting rapidly across the sky from north to south at a great height. There were signs of coming storm in some lofty stratum of the air. I was a little chilly, and, thinking that it was the sitting still after the exercise of walking, I resumed my journey.

The ground I passed over was now much more picturesque. There were no striking objects that the eye might single out; but in all there was a charm of beauty. I took little heed of time and it was only when the deepening twilight forced itself upon me that I began to think of how I should find my way home. The brightness of the day had gone. The air was cold, and the drifting of clouds high overhead was more marked. They were accompanied by a sort of far-away rushing sound, through which seemed to come at intervals that mysterious cry which the driver had said came from a wolf. For a while I hesitated. I had said I would see the deserted village, so on I went, and presently came on a wide stretch of open country, shut in by hills all around. Their sides were covered with trees which spread down

to the plain, dotting, in clumps, the gentler slopes and hollows which showed here and there. I followed with my eye the winding of the road, and saw that it curved close to one of the densest of these clumps and was lost behind it.

As I looked there came a cold shiver in the air, and the snow began to fall. I thought of the miles and miles of bleak country I had passed, and then hurried on to seek the shelter of the wood in front. Darker and darker grew the sky, and faster and heavier fell the snow, till the earth before and around me was a glistening white carpet the farther edge of which was lost in misty vagueness. The road was here but crude, and when on the level its boundaries were not so marked as when it passed through the cuttings; and in a little while I found that I must have strayed from it, for I missed underfoot the hard surface, and my feet sank deeper in the grass and moss. Then the wind grew stronger and blew with ever increasing force, till I was fain to run before it. The air became icy-cold, and in spite of my exercise I began to suffer. The snow was now falling so thickly and whirling around me in such rapid eddies that I could hardly keep my eyes open. Every now and then the heavens were torn asunder by vivid lightning, and in the flashes I could see ahead of me a great mass of trees, chiefly yew and cypress, all heavily coated with snow.

I was soon amongst the shelter of the trees, and there, in comparative silence, I could hear the rush of the wind high overhead. Presently the blackness of the storm had become merged in the darkness of the night. By and by the storm seemed to be passing away: it now only came in fierce puffs or blasts. At such moments the weird sound of the wolf appeared to be echoed by many similar sounds around me.

Now and again, through the black mass of drifting cloud, came a straggling ray of moonlight, which lit up the expanse, and showed me that I was at the edge of a dense mass of cypress and yew trees. As the snow had ceased to fall, I walked out from the shelter and began to investigate more closely. It appeared to me that, amongst so many old foundations as I had passed, there might be still standing a house in which, though in ruins, I could find some sort of shelter for awhile. As I skirted the edge of the copse, I found that a low wall encircled it, and following this I presently found an opening. Here the cypresses formed an alley leading up to a square mass of some kind of building. Just as I caught sight of this, however, the drifting clouds obscured the moon, and I passed up the path in darkness. The wind must have grown colder, for I felt myself shiver as I walked; but there was hope of shelter, and I groped my way blindly on.

I stopped, for there was a sudden stillness. The storm had passed; and, perhaps in sympathy with nature's silence, my heart seemed to cease to beat. But this was only momentarily; for suddenly the moonlight broke through the clouds, showing me that I was in a graveyard, and that the square object before me was a great massive tomb of marble, as white as the snow that lay on and all around it. With the moonlight there came a fierce sigh of the storm, which appeared to resume its course with a long, low howl, as of many dogs or wolves. I was awed and shocked, and felt the cold perceptibly grow upon me till it seemed to grip me by the heart. Then while the flood of moonlight still fell on the marble tomb, the storm gave further evidence of renewing, as though it was returning on its track.

Impelled by some sort of fascination, I approached the sepulcher to see what it was, and why such a thing stood alone in such a place.

I walked around it, and read, over the Doric door, in German:

COUNTESS DOLINGEN OF GRATZ
IN STYRIA
SOUGHT AND FOUND DEATH.
1801.

On the top of the tomb, seemingly driven through the solid marble—for the structure was composed of a few vast blocks of stone—was a great iron spike or stake. On going to the back I saw, graven in great Russian letters:

"The dead travel fast."

There was something so weird and uncanny about the whole thing that it gave me a turn and made me feel quite faint. I began to wish, for the first time, that I had taken Johann's advice. Here a thought struck me, which came under almost mysterious circumstances and with a terrible shock. This was Walpurgis Night!

Walpurgis Night, when, according to the belief of millions of people, the devil was abroad—when the graves were opened and the dead came forth and walked. When all evil things of earth and air and water held revel. This very place the driver had specially shunned. This was the depopulated village of centuries ago. This was where the suicide lay; and this was the place where I was alone—unmanned, shivering with cold in a shroud of snow with a wild storm gathering again upon me! It took all my philosophy, all the religion I had been taught, all my courage, not to collapse in a paroxysm of fright.

And now a perfect tornado burst upon me. The ground shook as though thousands of horses thundered across it; and this time the storm bore on its icy wings, not snow, but great hailstones which drove with such violence that they might have come from the thongs of Balearic slingers—hailstones that beat down leaf and branch and made the shelter of the cypresses of no more avail than if their stems were standing corn.

At the first I had rushed to the nearest tree; but I was soon fain to leave it and seek the only spot that seemed to afford refuge, the deep Doric doorway of the marble tomb. There, crouching against the massive bronze door, I gained a certain amount of protection from the beating of the hailstones, for now they only drove against me as they ricochetted from the ground and the side of the marble.

As I leaned against the door, it moved slightly and opened inward. The shelter of even a tomb was welcome in that pitiless tempest, and I was about to enter it when there came a flash of forked lightning that lit up the whole expanse of the heavens. In the instant, as I am a living man, I saw, as my eyes were turned into the darkness of the tomb, a beautiful woman, with rounded cheeks and red lips, seemingly sleeping on a bier. As the thunder broke overhead, I was grasped as by the hand of a giant and hurled out into the storm. The whole thing was so sudden that, before I could realize the shock, moral as well as physical, I found the hailstones beating me down. At the same time I had a strange, dominating feeling that I was not alone. I looked toward the tomb. Just then there came another blinding flash, which seemed to strike the iron stake that surmounted the tomb and to pour through to the earth, blasting and crumbling the marble, as in a burst of flame. The dead woman rose for a moment of agony, while she was lapped in the flame, and her bitter scream of pain was drowned in the thunder-crash. The last thing I heard was this mingling of dreadful sound, as again I was seized in the giant-grasp and dragged away, while the hailstones beat on me, and the air around seemed reverberant with the howling of wolves. The last sight that I remem-

ber was a vague, white, moving mass, as if all the graves around me had sent out the phantoms of their sheeted dead, and that they were closing in on me through the white cloudiness of the driving hail.

* * * * *

GRADUALLY there came a sort of vague beginning of consciousness; then a sense of weariness that was dreadful. For a time I remembered nothing; but slowly my senses returned. My feet seemed positively racked with pain, yet I could not move them. They seemed to be numbed. There was an icy feeling at the back of my neck and all down my spine, and my ears, like my feet, were dead, yet in torment; but there was in my breast a sense of warmth which was, by comparison, delicious. It was as a nightmare—a physical nightmare, if one may use such an expression; for some heavy weight on my chest made it difficult for me to breathe.

This period of semi-lethargy seemed to remain a long time, and as it faded away I must have slept or swooned. Then came a sort of loathing, like the first stage of sea-sickness, and a wild desire to be free from something—I knew not what. A vast stillness enveloped me, as though all the world were asleep or dead—only broken by the low panting as of some animal close to me. I felt a warm rasping at my throat, then came a consciousness of the awful truth, which chilled me to the heart and sent the blood surging up through my brain. Some great animal was lying on me and now licking my throat. I feared to stir, for some instinct of prudence bade me lie still; but the brute seemed to realize that there was now some change in me, for it raised its head. Through my eyelashes I saw above me the two great flaming eyes of a gigantic wolf. Its sharp white teeth gleamed in the gaping red mouth, and I could feel its hot breath fierce and acrid upon me.

For another spell of time I remembered no more. Then I became conscious of a low growl, followed by a yelp, renewed again and again. Then, seemingly very far away, I heard a "Holloa! holloa!" as of many voices calling in unison. Cautiously I raised my head and looked in the direction whence the sound came; but the cemetery blocked my view. The wolf still continued to yelp in a strange way, and a red glare began to move around the grove of cypresses, as though following the sound. As the voices drew closer, the wolf yelped faster and louder. I feared to make either sound or motion. Nearer came the red glow, over the white pall which stretched into the darkness around me.

Then all at once from beyond the trees there came at a trot a troop of horsemen bearing torches. The wolf rose from my breast and made for the cemetery. I saw one of the horsemen (soldiers by their caps and long military cloaks) raise his carbine and take aim. A companion knocked up his arm, and I heard the ball whizz over my head. He had evidently taken my body for that of the wolf. Another sighted the animal as it slunk away, and a shot followed. Then at a gallop, the troop rode forward—some toward me, others following the wolf as it disappeared amongst the snow-clad cypresses.

As they drew nearer I tried to move, but was powerless, although I could see and hear all that went on around me. Two or three of the soldiers jumped from their horses and knelt beside me. One of them raised my head, and placed his hand over my heart.

"Good news, comrades!" he cried. "His heart still beats!"

Then some brandy was poured down my throat; it put vigor into me, and I was able to open my eyes

fully and look around. Lights and shadows were moving among the trees, and I heard men call to one another. They drew together, uttering frightened exclamations; and the lights flashed as the others came pouring out of the cemetery pell-mell, like men possessed. When the farther ones came close to us, those who were around me asked them eagerly:

"Well, have you found him?"

The reply rang out hurriedly:

"No! no! Come away quick—quick! This is no place to stay, and on this of all nights!"

"What was it?" was the question, asked in all manner of keys. The answer came variously and all indefinitely as though the men were moved by some common impulse to speak, yet were restrained by some common fear from giving their thoughts.

"It—it—indeed!" gibbered one, whose wits had plainly given out for the moment.

"A wolf—and yet not a wolf!" another put in shudderingly.

"No use trying for him without the sacred bullet," a third remarked in a more ordinary manner.

"Serve us right for coming out on this night! Truly we have earned our thousand marks!" were the ejaculations of a fourth.

"There was blood on the broken marble," another said after a pause—"the lightning never brought that there. And for him—is he safe? Look at his throat! See, comrades, the wolf has been lying on him and keeping his blood warm."

The officer looked at my throat and replied:

"He is all right; the skin is not pierced. What does it all mean? We should never have found him but for the yelping of the wolf."

"What became of it?'" asked the man who was holding up my head, and who seemed the least panic-stricken of the party, for his hands were steady and without tremor. On his sleeve was the chevron of a petty officer.

"It went to its home," answered the man, whose long face was pallid, and who actually shook with terror as he glanced around him fearfully. "There are graves enough there in which it may lie. Come, comrades—come quickly! Let us leave this cursed spot."

The officer raised me to a sitting posture, as he uttered a word of command; then several men placed me upon a horse. He sprang to the saddle behind me, took me in his arms, gave the word to advance; and, turning our faces away from the cypresses, we rode away in swift, military order.

As yet my tongue refused its office, and I was perforce silent. I must have fallen asleep; for the next thing I remembered was finding myself standing up, supported by a soldier on each side of me. It was almost broad daylight, and to the north a red streak of sunlight was reflected, like a path of blood, over the waste of snow. The officer was telling the men to say nothing of what they had seen, except that they found an English stranger, guarded by a large dog.

"Dog! that was no dog," cut in the man who had exhibited such fear. "I think I know a wolf when I see one."

The young officer answered calmly: "I said a dog."

"Dog!" reiterated the other ironically. It was evident that his courage was rising with the sun; and, pointing to me, he said, "Look at his throat. Is that the work of a dog, master?"

Instinctively I raised my hand to my throat, and as I touched it I cried out in pain. The men crowded round to look, some stooping down from their saddles; and again there came the calm voice of the young officer:

"A dog, as I said. If aught else were said we should only be laughed at."

I was then mounted behind a trooper, and we rode on into the suburbs of Munich. Here we came across a stray carriage, into which I was lifted, and it was driven off to the Quatre Saisons—the young officer accompanying me, whilst a trooper followed with his horse, and the others rode off to their barracks.

When we arrived, Herr Delbrück rushed so quickly down the steps to meet me, that it was apparent he had been watching within. Taking me by both hands he solicitously led me in. The officer saluted me and was turning to withdraw when I recognized his purpose, and insisted that he should come to my rooms. Over a glass of wine I warmly thanked him and his brave comrades for saving me. He replied simply that he was more than glad, and that Herr Delbrück had at the first taken steps to make all the searching party pleased; at which ambiguous utterance the maître d'hotel smiled, while the officer pleaded duty and withdrew.

"But Herr Delbrück," I enquired, "how and why was it that the soldiers searched for me?"

He shrugged his shoulders, as if in depreciation of his own deed, as he replied:

"I was so fortunate as to obtain leave from the commander of the regiment in which I served, to ask for volunteers."

"But how did you know I was lost?" I asked.

"The driver came hither with the remains of his carriage, which had been upset when the horses ran away."

"But surely you would not send a search-party of soldiers merely on this account?"

"Oh, no!" he answered, "but even before the coachman arrived, I had this telegram from the Boyar whose guest you are," and he took from his pocket a telegram which he handed to me, and I read:

Bistritz.

Be careful of my guest—his safety is most precious to me. Should aught happen to him, or if he be missed, spare nothing to find him and ensure his safety. He is English and therefore adventurous. There are often dangers from snows and wolves and night. Lose not a moment if you suspect harm to him. I answer your zeal with my fortune.

Dracula.

As I held the telegram in my hand, the room seemed to whirl around me; and, if the attentive maître d'hotel had not caught me, I think I should have fallen. There was something so strange in all this, something so weird and impossible to imagine, that there grew on me a sense of my being in some way the sport of opposite forces—the mere vague idea of which seemed in a way to paralyze me. I was certainly under some form of mysterious protection. From a distant country had come, in the very nick of time, a message that took me out of the danger of the snow-sleep and the jaws of the wolf.

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The Eyrie

(Continued from page 726)

me a real recreation in the daily monotony of life, and also something like an occasional pleasure trip to a world outside the existing world of hard reality. I, for one, think you should continue your policy of giving us a monthly reprint story. For even the most genial of modern authors of weird or uncanny stories can not stir a developed fantasy as can such classic geniuses as Poe, Andreyeff, and several others. For instance, Andreyeff's *Lazarus*, which you recently published, could hardly be surpassed for weirdness, combined with literary skill. Of your late serials, I can not think of any that I admire more than *The Dark Chrysalis*. And your serial, *The Bride of Osiris*, is splendid, giving a very lucid idea of the old Egyptian rites and cult."

"Was much alarmed to hear of Dr. de Grandin's proposed trip back to France," writes Mrs. W. B. Pennington, of Smithville, Missouri, in a letter to The Eyrie. "For goodness' sake don't let him get away for good, whatever you do, as he's the spice of the whole magazine. *Don't let him get away.*"

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? It will help us to keep the magazine in line with your liking if you will let us know. Your favorite story in the October issue, as shown by your votes, was *Pickman's Model*, by H. P. Lovecraft, which was closely pressed for first honors by *The Dark Lore*, by Nictzin Dyalhis, and the first installment of *The Time-Raider*, by Edmond Hamilton.

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THREE COFFINS

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

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The Infidel's Daughter

(Continued from page 752)

dazzling blue whiteness. But this time in vain: for the massive door of the seventh stage was of plates and ponderous bars of bronze, against which no cutting torch can operate.

Hammers, chisels, hatchets and bars of iron were drawn from beneath the saffron robes of the Knights: and likewise, in anticipation of their ultimate entry, they produced and laid to one side cords, whips, and small cans of oil.

6

"*Adôn,*" murmured the Infidel's Daughter as she withdrew from Landon's embrace, "they have come to take the cabaret girl."

"What?"

"Yes. Listen. . . ."

A dull tapping; and then a voice from without muffled by the thickness of the massive door.

"Let us in. We only want the girl."

"Come in and get her!" mocked Landon.

"If we have to force this door, *you'll* get what's coming to *her.*"

"Try and force it!" And then, to the girl: "There is no other exit. Still——" And his eye paused, regarding an ancient, bull-headed mace that hung on the wall. "I'll give them a surprize."

He advanced toward the ponderous door.

"Don't!" protested the Infidel's Daughter.

"Single-handed——"

"No. In this ziggurât you called me from the shadows. Away from

(Continued on page 862)

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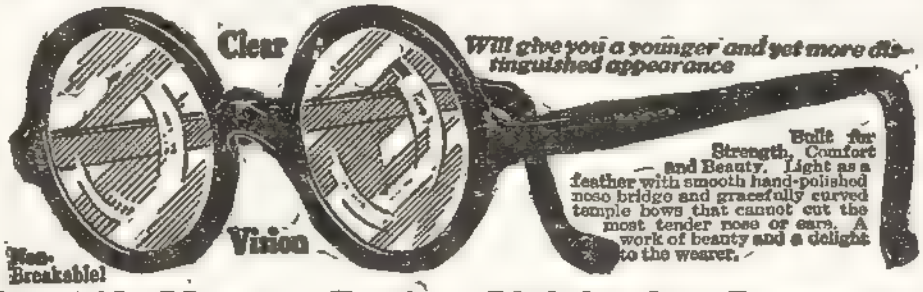

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(Continued from page 860)

here I can have no existence. The mortal frame of her who sought shelter with you has been consumed in the fire of your vision, so that she is not; nor was she ever. You, you can leave; single-handed, fight your way out. But me you must leave behind, if you leave at all."

"Fight my way out, and leave you behind?"

"Yes. For they can not harm or even touch me. The cabaret girl, yes; but not *Bint el Kafir*, not Sarpanit who has crossed the Border."

The besiegers were making no headway, no impression on the massive door which a hundred men with battering rams could not force.

"Nor can they pass that door until your vision has been fulfilled to the uttermost——"

"What further, *Kadishtu?*" wondered Landon, drunk with the splendor from across the Border.

"Thus far I have not overstepped human bounds; nor did I intend to until the end of this avatar, a long time from this first evening. For you are a man after my own heart, *Adôn*, and no mortal woman could love you as I do: so that I would have witheld the Hundred and First Kiss until the Lords of the Sign recalled me, for no mortal may live to tell of its mystery. But those meddling fools——"

She evaded his embrace, then continued, "But think well, *Adôn*. You can fight your way to freedom and escape. Me they will not find, for now I am not, save in your mind alone. The one they think they seek, the cabaret girl, has ceased to exist: for she served but to bring me to you. Therefore save yourself. And go your way, knowing what you have done. Knowing also that there is nothing before you: for you can not a second time call me from across the

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912,

Of Weird Tales, published monthly at Indianapolis, Indiana, for October 1, 1927.

State of Illinois } ss.
County of Cook }

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Wm. R. Sprenger, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Weird Tales and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher—Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Editor—Farnsworth Wright, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

Managing Editor—None.

Business Manager—William R. Sprenger. 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member must be given.)

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3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state). None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is..... (This information is required from daily publications only.)

WM. R. SPRENGER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1927. JAMES H. COREY,
[SEAL] Notary Public.
My commission expires July 12, 1928.

Border. If you wish . . . take your vision to its uttermost, and be consumed entirely, even as was Naramsin of Agade, whom you saw asleep in my villa on Djeb el Kafir . . . or go your way, to live long and emptily, without having tasted the fullness of your destiny. That door will hold until you open it to scatter those fools before you . . . or until like Naramsin you have been calcined in the mystery of the Hundred and First Kiss. . . . Choose, *Adôn!*"

Forgotten were the vengeful Knights who vainly battered the massive brazen door; forgotten was all peril, all the past and its multitudinous turmoils and imbroglios; forgotten all save the wonder and radiance of the Infidel's Daughter, Sarpanit whom he had called from across the Border, the Bright and Shining One whose smoldering eyes transfixed him, whose serpentine arms invited him, whose low, rippling voice murmured of incredible bliss and wonder beyond human endurance.

Landon dropped the heavy mace and turned from the brazen door.

"I have chosen."

The Lord of the Sign flamed fiercely as a bead of flame threaded on a silver wire. . . .

EVEN bronze has its limits. So that, failing by sheer force, the Knights finally succeeded with mallets and chisels. As the great door yielded, they wondered at the silence within, and at the overpowering, deadly sweetness that enveloped them, a dizzying, intoxicating, maddening sweetness that made their senses whirl and falter in confusion.

The Knights in their amazement forgot the girl they sought, and stared at the exalted, godlike features of the sleeper, that fierce outlaw whose hard eyes and haughty air had

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Next Month

THE GODS OF EAST AND WEST

By SEABURY QUINN

A SUPERB tale about the exploits of the little French ghost-breaker, Jules de Grandin, in his war against occult evil transplanted in America from India.

EVIL was the black image of Kali, the dark god of the Hindoos, and dire was its fearful power over the unfortunate Idoline Chetwynde. De Grandin calls to his aid the potent magic of a medicine-man of the American Indians, and the shadowy incarnations of the Gods of East and West wage a thrilling battle over the soul of the lovely American woman who has been enslaved by the occult evil of Kali. This story will be printed complete in the

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so long baffled them. On the shoulder of his purple robe they saw a strand of blue-black hair. On his forehead was a rosy imprint, as of the kiss of heavily rouged lips.

"Come to life!" growled the Grand Master with nervous gruffness. Then, remembering his mission: "Where is she?"

He shook the sleeper by the shoulder.

"Lord Christ!" he shrieked; *"nothing but skin and bones!"*

"Nothing but skin and bones!" echoed a mocking, deathly bitter voice from the shadows of the far corner of the shrine. The Infidel's Daughter, wraithlike, shadowy as a wisp of smoke, confronted them. "Fools! Meddlers!" continued that passionless, cold voice: "To save him from your stupidity which would have killed his soul too many years in advance of his body, I took the life of him who evoked me from the shadows and gave me human form. So take what is left of him . . . *skin and bones!"*

Her laugh was like the touch of a frosty blade . . . like the whisperings of an evil spirit.

The Grand Master was the first to reach the door. He tripped on his saffron robe, fell headlong down the stairs. And before sunrise he died, babbling of skin and bones, and of a girl and her poisonous, evil laugh.

As the sun rose, Ismeddin, whose tough skull had survived the blow that had stunned him, emerged from behind the winged bull where the invaders had tossed him.

The old man knew better than to touch the form of his master, or to disturb the curiously wrought silver diadem that lay in the hollow of Landon's shoulder.

"He found her in spite of me . . . and perhaps he will forgive my treason. . . ." And then, with profound obeisance, *"Es salaam aleika, saidi!"*

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It Was the Greatest Shock of My Life to Hear Her Play

—how had she found time to practice?

"WELL, Jim—I told you I had a surprise for you!"

She beamed at her husband, delighted to see how surprised—and pleased—he was.

And I was astonished, too. Quite casually she had gone to the piano, sat down—and played! Played beautifully—though I had never seen her touch a piano before. Neither of us could conceal our curiosity.

"How did you ever do it?" her husband asked. "When did you find time to practice?"

"And who is your teacher?" I added.

"Wait, wait!" she laughed. "One question at a time. I have no teacher, that is, no private teacher, and I do my practicing between dishes."

"No teacher."

"No—I learned to play the piano an entirely *new* way—*without* a teacher. You see, all my life I wanted to play some musical instrument. I thought I'd never learn how to play, though—for I haven't much time to spare, and I thought it would take long hours of hard work. And I thought it would be expensive, too."

"Well, it *is* hard work, and it is expensive," I said. "Why, I have a sister . . ."

"I know," she laughed, "but *I* learned to play the piano through the new simplified method. Some time ago I saw an announcement of the U. S. School of Music. It told how a young man had learned to play the piano during his spare time without a teacher. I found that thousands of others had learned to play their favorite musical instruments in this same delightful, easy way, and so I decided to enroll for a course in piano playing."

"But you didn't tell me anything about it," Jim said.

"Well, you see, that was my big surprise. Ever since I received my first lesson I've been practicing by myself—during the day while you've been away at business. I turned my spare moments between housekeeping and shopping into something pleasant and profitable."

"If you planned to surprise me—you've certainly succeeded," said Jim.

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